

Ex libris Joan: Shad

Christianity not Mysterious:

OR, A
TREATISE
Shewing,
That there is nothing in the
GOSPEL Contrary to
REASON,

Nor **ABOVE** it:
And that no Christian Doctrine
can be properly call'd
A MYSTERY.

By **JOHN TOLAND.**

The Second Edition Enlarg'd.

We need not desire a better Evidence that any Man is in the wrong, than to hear him declare against Reason, and thereby to acknowledg that Reason is against him. Arch-
bishop Tillotson.

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КИТАЙСКИЙ

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ИЗЛЯТЕНИЯ

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THE P R E F A C E.

I Believe all Men will readily allow, that none should speak with more Freedom and Assurance than he that defends or illustrates the Truth. But if we credit the History of former Time, or duly consider what passes in the present, we shall find none more backward to speak their Minds in publick than such as have Right on their side. Indeed the Goodness of their Cause and Design should fortify 'em, one would think, against all the Attacks of their Enemies: Nor are there wanting frequent Examples of Persons, who with unshaken Constancy suffer'd the

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most disgraceful and violent things for love of the Truth. Yet if we make a just Computation, and take in the Primitive Martyrs with the Prophets and Apostles themselves, the profess'd Defenders of Truth, only for Truth's sake, will be found to be a small handful with respect to the numerous Partizans of Error.

And such is the deplorable Condition of our Age, that a Man dares not openly and directly own what he thinks of Divine Matters, tho it be never so true and beneficial, if it but very slightly differs from what is receiv'd by any Party, or that is establish'd by Law; but he is either forc'd to keep perpetual Silence, or to propose his Sentiments to the World, by way of Paradox, under a borrow'd or fictitious Name. To mention the least part of the Inconveniences they expose themselves to, who hav

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have the Courage to act more above-board, is too melancholy a Theme, and visible enough to be lamented by all that are truly generous and vertuous.

The Pravity of most Mens Dispositions, and the Ambition of particular Persons makes this Matter seem less strange in Politick and Secular Affairs; and yet a Man may not only make new Discoveries and Improvements in Law or Physick, and in the other Arts and Sciences impunibly, but also for so doing be deservedly encourag'd and rewarded. But wonderful! That the sacred Name of Religion which sounds nothing but Sanctity, Peace, and Integrity, should be so universally abus'd to patronize Ambition, Impiety, and Contention! And that what is our highest Interest perfectly to understand, should (for Reasons afterwards to be laid open) both be main-

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tain'd to be obscure, and very industriously made so ! Nay, it is come to this, that Truth meets no where with stronger Opposition, than from many of those that raise the loudest Cry about it, and would be taken for no less than the only Dispensers of the Favours and Oracles of Heaven. If any has the Firmness to touch the minutest thing that brings them Gain or Credit, he's presently pursu'd with the Hue and Cry of Heresy : And, if he values their Censures, compell'd to make honourable Amends ; or if he proves contumacious, he falls a Sacrifice, at least in his Reputation, to their implacable Hatred.

Nor is he like, we may be sure, to receive fairer Quarter from the declar'd Antagonists of Religion, whose Principles, as they trample upon all Equity and Truth, so they oblige 'em to hate and molest the strenuous Affer-tors

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tors of these and all other *Vertues*.
But of such depressing Considerations
enough! Notwithstanding which, I
have ventur'd to publish this Dis-
course, designing thereby to rectify,
as much as I'm able, the narrow bigot-
ted Tenets of the One, and the most
impious Maxims of the Other.

No Atheist or Infidel of any kind
can justly be angry with me for mea-
suring Swords with them, and at-
tacking them only with the Weapons
they prescribe me. The true Chris-
tian can no more be offended when
he finds me employ Reason, not to e-
nervate or perplex, but to confirm and
elucidate Revelation; unless he is
apprehensive I should render it too
clear to my self, or too familiar to
others, which are Absurdities no Body
will own. I hope to make it appear,
that the Use of Reason is not so dan-
gerous in Religion as it is commonly

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represented, and that too by such as mightily extol it when it seems to favour 'em, yet vouchsafe it not a hearing when it makes against them, but oppose its own Authority to it self. These are high Privileges indeed, and the surest Means of having always the better of the Dispute that could possibly be devis'd.

That the mistaken Unbeliever may not say I serve a Hypothesis in the Defence of my Faith, like some who first imagine or receive an Opinion, and then study Proofs to establish it, I solemnly declare the thing is much otherwise; and that I hold nothing as an Article of my Religion, but what the highest Evidence forc'd me to embrace. For being educated, from my Cradle, in the grossest Superstition and Idolatry, God was pleas'd to make my own Reason, and such as made use of theirs, the happy Instruments of

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of my Conversion. Thus I have been very early accustom'd to Examination and Enquiry, and taught not to captivate my Understanding, no more than my Senses to any Man or Society whatsoever. Now the best Method, I think, of communicating to others the Truth, is that by which a Man has learnt it himself.

That the well-meaning Christian may not suspect, as it falls out very ordinarily, that I aim at more than I declare, and cunningly disguise some bad Principles under the fair Pretence of defending the true Religion; I assure him that I write with all the Sincerity and Simplicity imaginable, being as thoroughly convinc'd of what I maintain, as I can be of any thing. If any good Man should after this Protestation persist to think hard of me, it must needs proceed from violent Prepossessions: for
very

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very few can be found that are not deeply engag'd in some of one sort or another, for which a due Allowance must be made. How fond are we all apt to be of what we learn'd in our Youth, as the Sight or Remembrance of the Places where we past that agreeable Time, does strangely affect us ! A Mother is more charm'd with the lisping half-form'd Words of her prattling Infant, than with the best Language, and most solid Discourses. That any Upstart, but of Yesterday, should pretend to overthrow what cost the Antients so much Time and Breath to establish, and themselves so great Pains and Charges to learn, is of hard Digestion to some. And when others are but pray'd to explain their Terms, which commonly signify nothing, or what they must be ashame'd to own that would never be thought in an Error, they are uneasy, as an extravagant Mer-

Merchant to examine his Accompts ; and 'tis well if they can restrain their Passions. Not only a few Men, but oftentimes whole Societies, whilst they consider Things but very superficially, set such a Value upon certain Sounds, as if they were the real Essence of all Religion. To question or reject any of these, tho never so false and inconvenient, is dangerous Heterodoxy : And yet, as I hinted now, they either signify nothing, or have been invented by some leading Men to make plain things obscure, and not seldom to cover their own Ignorance. What is unpardonable, the holy Scripture is put to the Torture to countenance this Scholastick Jargon, and all the metaphysical Chimeras of its Authors. But the Weakness of the greatest part of these Prejudices is so notorious, that to mention them is sufficient Confutation : Nor shall

I be otherwise mov'd with any thing of this Nature, than a prudent Man would be at the Declamations of such as have recourse to Railing when Reason fails them.

As for those Gentlemen who suggest that the Credulity of Popery has frighted me to an unwarrantable Distance from it ; I have nothing to say for their Satisfaction, but that I don't envy them the cheap and commodious Mean they boast of, while I think Truth and Error to be the two Extreams. Religion is not to be modell'd according to our Fancies, nor to be judg'd of as it relates to our private Designs ; else there would be full as many Creeds as Persons : But how little soever our Notions agree, and let our worldly Conveniences be what they will, Religion is always the same, like God its Author, with whom there is no Va-

Variableness, nor Shadow of
changing.

If any should ask me whether I
have so good an Opinion of my own
Abilities, as to imagine that I can prove
a rational Account may be given of
all those jarring Doctrines, ambigu-
ous Terms, and puzzling Distinctions
which have for so many Centuries
sufficiently exercis'd the Learn'd of
all sorts: I answer, that I don't pre-
tend (as the Title Page can testify)
that we are able to explain the Terms
or Doctrines of this or that Age,
Council, or Nation, (most of which
are impervious Mysteries with a wit-
ness) but the Terms and Doctrines of
the Gospel. They are not the Articles
of the East or West, Orthodox or
Arian, Protestant or Papist, con-
sider'd as such, that I trouble my
self about, but those of Jesus Christ
and his Apostles. And in manag-
ing

ing this Argument, with every other good Action, I don't meerly rely upon my own poor Attainments, but also upon the Grace of God, who, I hope, will enable me to vindicate his reveal'd Will from the most unjust Imputations of Contradiction and Obscurity.

I may probably differ in many things from Persons deservedly eminent for their Learning, and Piety; but that ought to be no Advantage against me if Truth is evidently for me. Since Religion is calculated for reasonable Creatures, 'tis Conviction and not Authority that should bear Weight with them. A wise and good Man will judge of the Merits of a Cause consider'd only in it self, without any regard to Times, Places, or Persons. No Numbers, no Examples, no Interests can ever bias his solid Judgment, or corrupt his Integrity. He knows no Difference between

tween Popish Infallibility, and being oblig'd blindly to acquiesce in the Decisions of fallible Protestants. And for my own part, as I would have none by false or unfair Consequences make me say what I never thought of; so I would not be told I contradict any thing but Scripture or Reason, which, I'm sure, agree very well together. Nor can it appear strange that I should insist upon these Terms, since I most readily submit my self to them, and give all the World the same Right over me. I am not therefore to be put out of Countenance by venerable Names, and pompous Citations, that have no Value but such as an ugly Rust and Colour give antient Coins. God alone, and such as are inspir'd by him, can prescribe Injunctions relating to the World to come, whilst human Powers regulate the Affairs of this. Now, to speak more particularly concerning

cerning the following Performance, I don't expect any Deference should be paid me by the World, that spares no body; much less am I desirous of Abettors out of Singularity: but rather if the Reasons I offer be not cogent, I shall take in good part a modest and pertinent Animadversion. And if I am not so happy in rendering things perspicuous to others, as they seem to my self, yet I have fairly aim'd at it, and spoke what I think to be Truth without Fear or Favour; wherefore my good Intentions will need no other Apology.

Some Passages in the first Section or preliminary Dissertation of Reason, which, in the former Edition, I suspected would prove a little obscure to ordinary Readers, are now render'd more familiar. And tho I then declar'd that the understanding of those Passages was of no Consequence to any that

that would reason fairly, being only inserted to prevent the foreseen Wranglings of certain Men, who study rather to protract and perplex than to terminate a Controversy; yet I could not but readily comply at this time with the Desires of those, who wish'd 'em more clearly express'd, tho it should cost me a few Words more, whereof I shall always be as sparing as I can. I have likewise every where else endeavour'd to speak very intelligibly, and am not without hope that my Assertions do carry their own Light along with them. I have in many Places made explanatory Repetitions of difficult Words, by synonymous Terms of a more general and known Use. This Labour, I grant, is of no Benefit to Philosophers, but it is of considerable Advantage to the Vulgar, which I'm far from neglecting, like those who in every Preface

tell us they neither court nor care for them. I wonder how any can speak at this rate, especially of those whose very Business it is to serve the *Vulgar*, and spare them the Labour of long and painful Study, which their ordinary Occupations will not allow them. Lay-men pay for the Books and Maintenance of Churchmen for this very end: but I'm afraid some of the latter will no more believe this, than that Magistrates too are made for the People.

Nor can any from this Office of the Clergy infer, that the *Vulgar* are implicitly to receive their Arbitrary Dictates, no more than I am to make over my Reason to him I employ to read, transcribe, or collect for me. The Learn'd will not, contrary to the Experience of their own Taste, take the Brewer's or the Baker's Word for the Goodness of Bread or Drink, tho ignorant

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gnorant of their Craft. And why may not the Vulgar likewise be Judges of the true Sense of Things, tho they understand nothing of the Tongues from whence they are translated for their Use? Truth is always and every where the same ; and an unintelligible or absurd Proposition is to be never the more respected for being antient or strange, for being originally written in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew. Besides, a Divinity only intelligible to such as live by it, is, in humane Language, a Trade ; and I see not how they can be angry at the Name, that are so passionately in love with the Thing. But of this in due place.

The Poor, who are not suppos'd to understand Philosophical Systems, soon apprehended the Difference between the plain convincing Instructions of Christ, and the intricate ineffectual Declamations of the Scribes. For

the Jewish Rabbies, divided at that time into Stoick, Platonick, and Pythagorean Sects, &c. did by a mad Liberty of Allegory, accommodate the Scriptures to the wild Speculations of their several Masters. They made the People, who comprehended nothing of their Cabalistick Observations, believe 'em to be all profound Mysteries; and so taught 'em Subjection to Heathenish Rites, whilst they set the Law of God at nought by their Traditions. No wonder then if the disinterested common sort, and the more ingenuous among the Rulers, did reject these nonsensical Superstitions, tho impudently father'd upon Moses, for a Religion suited to the Capacities of all, delineated, and foretold by their own Prophets.

I wish no Application of this could be made, in the following Discourse, to the Case of any Christians; much less

ess to the purer and better sort. Whoever considers with what Eager-
ness and Rigour some Men press
Obedience to their own Constitutions
and Discipline, (conniving in the
mean while at all Nonconformity to
the Divine Law) how strictly they en-
join the Observation of unreasonable,
unscriptural Ceremonies, and the Be-
lief of those unfathomable Explan-
ations of what they stiffly hold them-
selves to be incomprehensible ; I say,
who considers all this, is vehemently
tempted to suspect they drive a more
selfish Design than that of instructing
the Ignorant, or converting the Sinner.
That any should be hated, de-
spis'd, and molested ; nay, some-
times be charitably burn'd and damn'd,
for rejecting those Fooleries superadd-
ed, and in many Cases substituted
to the most blessed, pure, and practi-
cable Religion that Men could wish or

a 3 enjoy,

enjoy, is Matter of Astonishment and Grief to such as prefer the Precepts of God to the Inventions of Men, the plain Paths of Reason to the insuperable Labyrinths of the Fathers, and true Christian Liberty to Diabolical and Antichristian Tyranny.

* But the common Method of teaching and supporting this Mystery of Iniquity is still more intolerable. How many voluminous Systems, infinitely more difficult than the Scripture, must be read with great Attention by him that would be Master of the present Theology? What a prodigious Number of barbarous Words, (mysterious no doubt) what tedious and immethodical Directions, what ridiculous and discrepant Interpretations must you patiently learn and observe, before you can begin to understand a Professor of that Faculty? The last and easiest part of your Labour will be, to find

find his Sentiments in the Bible, tho the holy Penmen never thought of them, and you never read that sacred Book since you were a School-Boy. But a Distrust of your own Reason, a blind Veneration for those that liv'd before you, and a firm Resolution of adhering to all the Expositions of your Party, will do any thing. Believe only, as a sure Foundation for all your Allegories, that the Words of Scripture, tho never so equivocal and ambiguous without the Context, may signify every where whatever they can signify: And, if this be not enough, believe that every Truth is a true Sense of every Passage of Scripture; that is, that any thing may be made of every thing: And you'll not only find all the New Testament in the Old, and all the Old in the New; but, I promise you, there's no Explication, tho never so violent,

violent, tho never so contradictory or perplex'd, but you may as easily establish as admit.

But I will not repeat what I have expressly written of this Matter in an Epistolary Dissertation, now lying by me, entitul'd, Systems of Divinity exploded. In the following Discourse, which is the first of three, and wherein I prove my Subject in general, the Divinity of the New Testament is taken for granted; so that it regards only Christians immediately, and others but remotely, who are pray'd to weigh my Arguments by the said Supposition. In the next Discourse, equally concerning Christians and others, I attempt a particular and rational Explanation of the reputed Mysteries of the Gospel. And in the third, I demonstrate the Verity of Divine Revelation against Atheists, and all Enemies of reveal'd Religion.

This

This seems to me to be the best Method; for the Order of Nature is in your Systems of Divinity quite inverted. They prove the Authority and Perfection, before they teach the Contents of Scripture; whereas the first is in great measure known by the last. How can any be sure that the Scripture contains all things necessary to Salvation, till he first reads it over? Nay, how can he conclude it to be Scripture, or the Word of God, till he exactly studies it, to speak now of no other Means he must use? This Confusion then I have carefully avoided; for I prove first, that the true Religion must necessarily be reasonable and intelligible. Next I shew, that these requisite Conditions are found in Christianity. But seeing a Man of good Parts and Knowledg may easily frame a clear and coherent System, I demonstrate, Thirdly, that the

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Christian Religion was not form'd after such a manner, but was divinely reveal'd from Heaven. These three Subjects I handle in as many Books; whereof, as I said before, the following Discourse is the first.

Before I finish, I must take notice of those Gentlemen who love to call Names in Religion: for what are all Party-Distinctions, but, according to them, so many sorts of Hereticks, or Schismaticks, or worse? But I assure them, that I am neither of Paul, nor of Cephas, nor of Apollos, but of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, who is the Author and Finisher of my Faith. I have as much Right to have others call'd after my Name, as they to give me a Denomination, and that is no Right at all. I say not this to prevent being invidiously represented, according to a very common Artifice, under the Nation

tion of any Sect in the World that is
justly or unjustly hated by others.
This would be a poor Consideration
indeed! but it is my settl'd Judgment,
that the thing is unlawful in it self
to a good Christian. Leaving others
nevertheless their Liberty in this
Point, it must, at least, be granted
inconvenient: for if you go under the
Name of a Lutheran, for instance,
tho you agree with those of your Com-
munion but in the main Articles, yet
their Adversaries will not fail, upon
occasion, to charge you with those other
Matters wherein you dissent: And
should you then declare your Judg-
ment, the rest of the Lutherans
will not only be much offended, but be
apt also to call your Sincerity in ques-
tion about every thing besides; which
is the known Temper of most Sects.
The only religious Title therefore that
I shall ever own, for my part, is
that

that most glorious one of being a Christian.

A Word or two more I must add in answer to the Malice or Mistake of some, who will needs have it that I'm a declar'd Enemy to all Churchmen, and consequently (say they) to all Religion, because I make 'em' the sole Contrivers of those inconceivable or mysterious Doctrines, which I also maintain are as advantageous to themselves, as they are prejudicial to the Laity. Indeed there are those, who, easily overlooking all Contempt of the true Religion, are very ready to treat 'em as pernicious Hereticks, or unsufferable Atheists, that shew the least Dislike of what are acknowledg'd Additions to Christianity, whatever Convenience or Necessity may be pretended for their Establishment. If any such understand by Religion the mysterious Part of it, then truly it

will

will be no hard matter to prove me as little favourable to this Religion, as I'm far from making any Apologies for my self to the Professors of it.

As for charging Church-men with being the Authors and Introducers of the Christian Mysteries, they must be my Enemies for telling the Truth, who are displeas'd at it: for there is no matter of Fact more evident from every Page both of the Civil, and Ecclesiastick Histories. Nor had the Laity ever any hand in that Business, otherwise than as confirming by Legal Sanctions what they were first persuad'd to by the preaching of their Priests; as they do now sometimes, at their Sollicitation, imprison excommunicated, and prosecute erroneous Persons, after the Excommunication is first pronounc'd, and the Heresy decreed or declar'd by the Clergy. Now as all Church-men are not in

in their Opinions for these Practices, so I see no better Reason they have to be angry with any Body for writing against them that are, than a good Prince can pretend for punishing the Historian of a Tyrant's Vices, only because the Tyrant had been likewise a Prince.

* To all corrupt Clergy-men therefore, who make a meer Trade of Religion, and build an unjust Authority upon the abus'd Consciences of the Lai-ty, I'm a profest Adversary; as I hope every good and wise Man already is, or will be. But as I shall always remain a hearty Friend to pure and genuine Religion, so I shall preserve the highest Veneration for the sincere Teachers thereof, than whom there is not a more useful Order of Men, and without whom there could not be any happy Society or well constituted Government in this World, to speak nothing

nothing of their Relation to the World to come, nor of the double Esteem which they deserve for keeping Proof against the general Infection of their Profession. But I have no Apprehensions from the sincere; and if the designing Party discover their Concern by their Displeasure, it may well serve for a Mark to distinguish them, but will not be thought an Injury by me.

ERRATA.

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r. Decrees.

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CHRIS.

(1)

CHRISTIANITY not
Mysterious, &c.

The State of the Question.

Nº 1. **T**HHERE is nothing that Men make a greater Noise about, in our Time especially, than what they generally profess least of all to understand. It may be easily concluded, I mean *the Mysterious of the Christian Religion*. The *Divines*, whose peculiar Province it is to explain them to others, almost unanimously own their Ignorance concerning them. They gravely tell us, *we must adore what we cannot comprehend*: And yet some of 'em press their dubious Comments upon the rest of Mankind with more Assurance and Heat, than could be tolerably justify'd, tho' we should grant them to be absolutely infallible.

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The worst on't is, they are not all of a Mind. If you be *Orthodox* to those, you are a *Heretick* to these. He that sides with a Party is adjudg'd to Hell by the Rest; and if he declares for none, he receives no milder Sentence from all.

2. Some of 'em say the *Mysteries of the Gospel* are to be understood only in the *Sense of the Antient Fathers*. But that is so multifarious, and inconsistent with it self, as to make it impossible for any Body to believe so many Contradictions at once. They themselves did caution their Readers from leaning upon their Authority, without the *Evidence of Reason*: And thought as little of becoming a Rule of Faith to their Posterity, as we do to ours. Moreover, as all the *Fathers* were not Authors, so we cannot properly be said to have their genuine *Sense*. The Works of those that have written are wonderfully corrupted and adulterated, or not entirely extant: And if they were, their Meaning is much more obscure, and subject to Controversy, than that of the *Scripture*.

3. Others

3. Others tell us we must be of the Mind of some *particular Doctors*, pronounced Orthodox by the Authority of the *Church*. But as we are not a whit satisfy'd with any Authority of that Nature, so we see these same *particular Doctors* could no more agree than the whole Herd of the *Fathers*; but tragically declaim'd against one another's Practices and Errors: That they were as injudicious, violent, and factious as other Men: That they were for the greatest part very credulous and superstitious in Religion, as well as pitifully ignorant and superficial in the minutest Punctilio's of Literature. In a word, that they were of the same Nature and Make with our selves; and that we know of no Privilege above us bestow'd upon them by Heaven, except Priority of Birth, if that be one, as it's likely few will allow.

4. Some give a decisive Voice in the Unravelling of *Mysteries*, and the Interpretation of *Scripture*, to a *General Council*; and others to *one Man* whom they hold to be the Head of the *Church* Universal upon Earth, and the infallible Judg of all Controversies. But we

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do not think such *Councils* possible, nor (if they were) to be of more Weight than the *Fathers*; for they consist of such, and others as obnoxious altogether to Mistakes and Passions: And besides, we cannot have Recourse, as to a standing Rule, for the Solution of our Difficulties, to a wonder by God's Mercy now more rarely seen than the secular Games of old. As for the *one Judge of all Controversies*, we suppose none but such as are strongly possessed by Interest or Education can in good earnest digest those chimerical supreme Headships, and Monsters of Infallibility. We read no where in the *Bible* of such delegate Judges appointed by *Christ* to supply his Office: And *Reason* manifestly proclaims them frontleſs Usurpers. Nor is their Power finally distinguish'd from that of *Councils* to this Hour, by the miserable Admirers of both.

5. They come nearest the thing who affirm, that we are to keep to what the *Scriptures* determine about these Matters: and there is nothing more true, if rightly understood. But ordinarily 'tis an equivocal Way of speak-

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Speaking, and nothing less than the proper Meaning of it is intended by many of those that use it: For they make the *Scriptures* speak either according to some spurious *Philosophy*, or they conform them right or wrong to the bulky Systems and Formularies of their several Communions.

6. Some will have us always believe *what the literal Sense imports*, with little or no Consideration for *Reason*, which they reject as not fit to be employ'd about the reveal'd Part of Religion. Others assert, that we may use *Reason* as the Instrument, but not the Rule of our Belief. The first contend, some *Mysteries* may be, or at least seem to be *contrary to Reason*, and yet be receiv'd by Faith. The second, that no *Mystery* is contrary to *Reason*, but that all are *above* it. Both of 'em from different Principles agree, that several Doctrines of the *New Testament* belong no farther to the Enquiries of *Reason* than to prove 'em divinely reveal'd, and that they are properly *Mysteries* still.

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7. On

7. On the contrary, we hold that *Reason* is the only Foundation of all Certitude; and that nothing reveal'd, whether as to its *Manner* or *Existence*, is more exempted from its Disquisitions, than the ordinary Phenomena of Nature. Wherefore, we likewise maintain, according to the Title of this Discourse, that *there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, nor above it*; and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd a *Mystery*.

S E C.

SECTION I.

Of REASON.

1. **T**HE State of the Question being thus fairly laid, our next business is to proceed to the Proof thereof. But as the distinct and brief Explanation of the Terms is of indispensable use in discussing all Controversies; so an easy and natural Method is not less pleasing than profitable. It happily falls out that the Terms of the present Question are dispos'd according to the Order I design to observe; which is, First, to shew what is meant by *Reason*, and its Properties: Then to prove there's no Doctrine of the Gospel contrary to *Reason*: After that, to evince that neither is there any of them above *Reason*; and by consequence, that none is a *Mystery*.



C H A P. I.

What *REASON* is not.

2. **T**O begin with the first, *viz.* *Reason*. It appears to me very odd, that Men should need Definitions and Explanations of that whereby they define and explain all other things: Or that they cannot agree about what they all pretend, in some measure at least, to possess; and is the only Privilege they claim over Brutes and Inanimates. But we find by Experience, that the word *Reason* is become as equivocal and ambiguous as any other; though all that are not tickl'd with the Vanity of Singularity, or Itch of Dispute, are at bottom agreed about the Thing. I'll handle it here with what Brevity I can.

3. They are mistaken who take the *Soul, abstractedly consider'd*, for *Reason*: For as the general Idea of Gold is not a Guinea, but a piece determin'd to a particular Stamp and Value; so not the *Soul* it self, but the *Soul* acting in a certain

certain and peculiar Manner, is *Reason*. Ch. 1. They err likewise, who affirm *Reason* to be *that Order, Report, or Relation which is naturally between all things*: For not this, but the Thoughts which the Soul forms of things according to it, may properly claim that Title. They speed no better who call *their own Inclinations, or the Authority of others*, by that Name. But it will better appear what it is from the following Considerations.

4. Every one experiences in himself a Power or Faculty of forming various Ideas or Perceptions of Things: Of affirming or denying, according as he sees them to agree or disagree: And so of loving and desiring what seems good unto him; and of hating and avoiding what he thinks evil. The right Use of all these Faculties is what we call Common Sense, or *Reason* in general. But the bare Act of receiving Ideas into the Mind, whether by the *Intromission of the Senses*, as Colours, Figures, Sounds, Smells, &c. or whether those Ideas be the *simple Operations of the Soul* about what it thus gets from without, as mere *Consciousness* for

Sect. I. for Example, *Knowing*, *Affirming*, or
Denying, without any farther Considerations: This bare Act, I say, of receiving such Ideas into the Mind, is not strictly *Reason*, because the Soul herein is purely passive. When a proper Object is conveniently presented to the Eye, Ear, or any other Sense rightly dispos'd, it necessarily makes those Impressions which the Mind at the same time cannot refuse to lodg. And we find it can as little forbear being conscientious of its own Thoughts or Operations concerning this Object: Thus when my Eyes are sound and open, as at this time, I have not only an Idea of the Picture that is before me, but I likewise know, I perceive, and affirm that I see it, I consider it, it pleases me, I wish it were mine: And thus I form, or rather after this manner I have first form'd, the Ideas of *Knowing*, *Perceiving*, *Affirming*, *Denying*, *Considering*, *Willing*, *Desiring*, and the Ideas of all the other Operations of the Mind, which are thus occasion'd by the Antecedent Impressions of sensible Objects.

5. By the word IDEA which I make Ch. 2. so much use of here, and shall more frequently in the following Discourse, I understand the immediate Object of the Mind when it thinks, or any Thought that the Mind employs about any thing, whether such a Thought be the Image or Representation of a Body, as is the Idea of a Tree; or whether it be some Sensation occasion'd by any Body, such as are the Ideas of Cold and Heat, of Smells and Tastes; or whether, lastly, it be a *merely intellectual or abstracted Thought*, such as are the Ideas of God and created Spirits, of Arguing, of Suspension, of Thinking in general, or the like.

C H A P. II.

Wherein REASON consists.

6. **B**UT altho' these simple and distinct Ideas, thus laid up in the great Repository of the Understanding, be not, as was observ'd, what we call strictly Reason, yet they are the sole Matter and Foundation of all

our

Sect. I. *our Reasoning*: For the Mind does upon occasion compare them together, compound them into complex Ideas, and enlarge, contract, or separate them, as it discovers their Circumstances capable or not. So that all our Knowledg is, in effect, nothing else but *the Perception of the Agreement or Disagreement of our Ideas in a greater or lesser Number, whereinsoever this Agreement or Disagreement may consist.* And because this Perception is immediate or mediate, our Knowledg is twofold.

7. First, *When the Mind, without the Assistance of any other Idea, immediately perceives the Agreement or Disagreement of two or more Ideas, as that Two and Two is Four, that Red is not Blew; it cannot be call'd Reason, tho it be the highest Degree of Evidence:* For here's no need of Discourse or Probation, *Self-evidence* excluding all manner of Doubt and Darkness. Propositions so clear of themselves as to want no Proofs, their Terms being once understood, are commonly known by the Names of *Axioms* and *Maxims*. And it is visible that their Number is indefinite, and not confin'd only to two

or

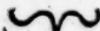
or three abstracted Propositions made Ch. 2.
(as all *Axioms* are) from the Observa-
tion of particular Instances ; as, that
the Whole is greater than any Part, that
Nothing can have no Properties.

8. But, Secondly, when the Mind
cannot immediately perceive the Agree-
ment or Disagreement of any Ideas, be-
cause they cannot be brought near enough
together, and so compar'd, it applies one or
more intermediate Ideas to discover it :
as, when by the successive Application
of a Line to two distant Houses, I
find how far they agree or disagree in
Length, which I could not effect with
my Eye. Thus from the Force of the
Air, and the Room it takes up, I know
it has Solidity and Extension ; and that
therefore it is as much a Body (tho
I cannot see it) as Wood, or Stone,
with which it agrees in the said Pro-
perties. Here *Solidity* and *Extension*
are the Line by which I find *Air* and
Body are equal, or that *Air* is a Body ;
because Solidity and Extension agree
to both. We prove the least imagi-
nable Particle of Matter divisible, by
shewing all Bodies to be divisible ; be-
cause every Particle of Matter is like-
wise

Sect. I. wise a Body : and after the like manner, is the Mortality of all living Bodies inferr'd from their Divisibility. This Method of Knowledg is properly call'd Reason or Demonstration, (as the former Self-evidence or Intuition) ; and it may be defin'd, That Faculty of the Soul which discovers the Certainty of any thing dubious or obscure, by comparing it with something evidently known.

9. From this Definition it is plain, that the intermediate Idea can be no Proof where its Agreement with both the Ideas of the Question is not evident ; and that if more than one Idea be necessary to make it appear, the same Evidence is requir'd in each of them. For if the Connection of all the Parts of a Demonstration were not indubitable, we could never be certain of the Inference or Conclusion whereby we join the two Extreams : So tho Self-evidence excludes Reason, yet all Demonstration becomes at length self-evident. It is yet plainer, that when we have no Notions or Ideas of a thing, we cannot reason about it at all ; and where we have Ideas, if intermediate ones, to shew their constant and necessary Agreement or Disagree-

agreement, fail us, we can never go beyond Probability. Tho we have an Idea of *inhabited*, and an Idea of the *Moon*, yet we have no intermediate Idea to shew such a necessary Connection between them, as to make us certainly conclude that *this Planet is inhabited*, however likely it may seem. Now, since *PROBABILITY* is not *KNOWLEDG*, I banish all *HYPOTHESES* from my *PHILOSOPHY*; because if I admit never so many, yet *my Knowledg is not a jot increas'd*: for no evident Connection appearing between my Ideas, I may possibly take the wrong side of the Question to be the right, which is equal to knowing nothing of the Matter. When I have arriv'd at *Knowledge*, I enjoy all the Satisfaction that attends it; where I have only *Probability*, there I suspend my Judgment, or, if it be worth the Pains, I search after Certainty.



CHAP. III.

Of the Means of INFORMATION.

10. **B**UT besides these Properties of Reason which we have explain'd, we are yet most carefully to distinguish in it *the Means of Information*, from *the Ground of Persuasion*: for the Neglect of this easy Distinction has thrown Men into infinite Mistakes, as I shall prove before I have done. *The Means of Information* I call those Ways whereby any thing comes barely to our Knowldg, without necessarily commanding our Assent. By *the Ground of Persuasion*, I understand that Rule by which we judg of all Truth, and which irresistibly convinces the Mind. The *Means of Information* are EXPERIENCE and AUTHORITY: *Experience* (as you may see N° 4.) is either external, which furnishes us with the Ideas of sensible Objects; or internal, which helps us to the Ideas of the Operations of our own Minds. This is the common Stock of all

all our Knowledg ; nor can we possibly have Ideas any other way without new Organs or Faculties.

11. *Authority*, abusively so call'd, as if all its Informations were to be receiv'd without Examen, is either *Humane* or *Divine*: *Humane Authority* is call'd also *Moral Certitude*; as when I believe an intelligible Relation made by my Friend, because I have no Reason to suspect his Veracity, nor he any Interest to deceive me. Thus *all possible Matters of Fact*, duly attested by *converging Persons as known to them, and successively related by others of different Times, Nations, or Interests*, who could neither be impos'd upon themselves, nor be justly suspected of combining together to deceive others, ought to be receiv'd by us for as certain and indubitable as if we had seen them with our own Eyes, or heard them with our own Ears. By this means it is, I believe there was such a City as *Carthage*, such a Reformer as *Luther*, and that there is such a Kingdom as *Poland*. When all these Rules concur in any Matter of Fact, I take it then for *Demonstration*, which is nothing else but *Irresistible Evidence from proper*

Sect. I. proper Proofs: But where any of these
 ~~~ Conditions are wanting, the thing is  
 uncertain, or, at best, but *probable*, which,  
 with me, are not very different.

12. The *Authority of God, or Divine Revelation*, is the Manifestation of Truth by Truth it self, to whom it is impossible to lie: Whereof at large in Ch. 2. of the following Section. Nothing in Nature can come to our Knowledg but by some of these four means, *viz.* *The Experience of the Senses, the Experience of the Mind, Human and Divine Revelation.*

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## CHAP. IV.

### Of the Ground of PERSUASION.

13. **N**OW, as we are extreinly subject to Deception, we may, without some infallible Rule, often take a questionable Proposition for an *Axiom*, Old Wives Fables for *Moral Certitude*, and Humane Impostures for *Divine Revelation*. This infallible Rule, or Ground of all right Persuasion, is Evidence; and it consists in

in the exact Conformity of our Ideas or Ch. 4, Thoughts with their Objects, or the ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> Things we think upon. For as we have only Ideas in us, and not the Things themselves, 'tis by those we must form a Judgment of these.

14. Ideas therefore being Representative Beings, their Evidence naturally consists in the Property they have of truly representing their Objects. Nor that I think every Idea has a perfect Pattern to represent, as the Ideas of *Length* and *Motion* in my Mind are like the *Length* and *Motion* of the Pen I handle; for some Ideas are but the Result of certain Powers in the Particles of Bodies to OCCASION particular Sensations in us; as the Sweetness of Sugar and the Cold of Ice, are no more inherent in them than Pain in the Knife that cuts me, or Sickness in the Fruit that surfeits me. But tho such *occasional Ideas* have no Existence out of our Imagination, yet the Pleasure, Pain, and other Qualities they excite, shew us the Good or Harm their Subjects may do us; which renders the Knowledg of them as useful as that of the Properties which *really* exist in the

Sect. I. Things themselves. Without the *Heat* and *Light of Fire*, what should its *Figure* and *Quantity* serve for? And what sets a Price upon Amber-greece, but the *Perfume*? The Reason then why I believe the Idea of a Rose to be evident, is the true Representation it gives me of that Flower. I know it is true, because the Rose must contain all the Properties which its Idea exhibits, either *really*, as the Bulk and Form, or *occasionally*, as the Colour, Taste and Smell. And I cannot doubt of this, because the Properties must belong to the exemplary Cause, or to Nothing, or be the Figments of my own Brain: But *Nothing can have no Properties*; and *I cannot make one single Idea at my Pleasure*, nor *avoid receiving Ideas when Objects work on my Senses*: Therefore I conclude the Properties of the Rose are not the Creatures of my Fancy, but belong to the exemplary Cause, that is, the Object.

15. The Evidence of the Ideas of the Operations of the Mind, is infallible as that of our own Being; and if by any Impossibility we should call the latter in question, 'twould but serve to give

us.

is the greater Assurance of it : For be- Ch. 4.  
sides the unavoidable Supposition of ~~our~~  
our Existence in this very Proposition,  
*I doubt if I am* ; so it is clear, that  
whatever doubts must needs be as  
much something as what affirms, and  
this something I call *my self*. Let us  
now but strictly require this *Evidence*  
in all the Agreements and Disagree-  
ments of our Ideas in things meerly  
speculative, and as far as we can in  
Matters of common Practice, (for  
these must of necessity sometimes ad-  
mit *Probability* to supply the Defect of  
*Demonstration*) ; and we may without  
a lazy Reliance upon *Authority*, or a  
sceptical *Progress to Infinity*, suc-  
cessfully trace the Truth, and bring it to  
view the Light from those subterra-  
neous Caverns where it is suppos'd to  
lie conceal'd. It is impossible for us  
to err as long as we take *Evidence* for  
our Guide ; and we never mistake, but  
when we wander from it by abusing  
our *Liberty*, in *denying that of any thing*  
*which belongs to it*, or *attributing to it*  
*what we do not see in its Idea*. This is  
the primary and universal Origin of all  
our *Errors*.

Sect. I. 16. But God the wise Creator of all, (ever to be nam'd and thought upon with Reverence) who has enabl'd us to perceive Things, and form Judgments of them, has also endu'd us with the Power of suspending our Judgments about whatever is uncertain, and of never assenting but to clear Perceptions. He is so far from putting us upon any Necessity of erring, that as he has thus privileg'd us on the one hand with a Faculty of guarding our selves against Prepossession, or Precipitation, by placing our Liberty only in what is indifferent, or dubious and obscure; so he provides on the other hand, that we should discern and embrace the Truth, by taking it out of our Power to dissent from an evident Proposition. We must necessarily believe, that it is impossible the same thing should be and not be at once: Nor can all the World perswade us to doubt of it. But we need not admit that there's no Void in Nature, or that the Earth absolves an annual Course about the Sun, till we get Demonstrations to that Effect.

17. If People precipitate their Assent, either because they find the Search of Truth

Truth attended with more Difficulties Ch. 4. than they are willing to run through, or because they would not seem to be ignorant of any thing, this is their fault. Wherefore let us attribute all our false Notions to our own Anticipation and Inattention: Let us confess our Destruction to be of our selves; and cheer- 2 Pet. 2.1. fully thank our kind Disposer, who has put us under a Law of bowing before the Light and Majesty of Evidence. And truly if we might doubt of any thing that is clear, or be deceiv'd by distinct Conceptions, there could be nothing certain: Neither Conscience, nor God himself, should be regarded: No Society or Government could subsist. But it is as true, that if we could not suspend our Assent to dubious or obscure Propositions, Almighty Goodness (which is impossible) should be the real Cause of all our Errors.

18. If it should be ask'd, why Assent is deny'd to true Propositions, since Evidence necessarily requires it? I answer, 'tis because they are not made evident: For Perspicuity and Obscurity are relative Terms, and what is either to me may be the quite contrary

Sect. I. to another. If Things be deliver'd in  
Words not understood by the Hearer,  
nor demonstrated to agree with other  
Truths already very clear, or now so  
made to him, he cannot conceive 'em.  
Likewise if the Order of Nature  
and due Simplicity be not observ'd,  
he cannot see them evidently true or  
false ; and so suspends his Judgment,  
(if no Affection sways him) where  
another, it may be, receives perfect Sa-  
tisfaction. Hence it is that we fre-  
quently, with Indignation and Won-  
der, attribute that to the Stupidity and  
Obstinacy of others, which is the Fruit  
of our own confus'd Ratiocination, for  
want of having throughly digested our  
Thoughts ; or by affecting ambiguous  
Expressions, and using such as the o-  
ther has no Ideas to at all, or different  
ones from ours.

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S E C T.

## SECT. II.

### *That the Doctrines of the Gospel are not contrary to Reason.*

1. **A**fter having said so much of *Reason*, I need not operose-  
ly shew what it is to be con-  
trary to it; for I take it to be very in-  
telligible from the precedent Section,  
that *what is evidently repugnant to clear  
and distinct Ideas, or to our common No-  
tions, is contrary to Reason*: I go on  
therefore to prove, that *the Doctrines  
of the Gospel*, if it be the Word of  
God, *cannot be so*. But if it be ob-  
jected, that very few maintain they  
are: I reply, that no *Christian* I know  
of now (for we shall not disturb the  
Ashes of the Dead) expressly says  
*Reason* and the *Gospel* are contrary to  
one another. But, which returns to  
the

Sect.II. the same, very many affirm, that tho<sup>u</sup> the Doctrines of the latter cannot in themselves be contradictory to the Principles of the former, as proceeding both from God; yet, that according to our Conceptions of them, *they may seem directly to clash*: And that we cannot reconcile them by reason of our corrupt and limited Understandings; yet that from the Authority of *Divine Revelation*, we are bound to believe and acquiesce in them; or, as the *Fathers taught 'em to speak, to adore what we cannot comprehend.*

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### C H A P. I.

*The Absurdity and Effects of admitting any real or seeming Contradictions in RELIGION.*

2. **T**HIS famous and admirable <sup>word</sup> Doctrine is the undoubted Source of all the *Absurdities* that ever were seriously vented among *Christians*. Without the Pretence of it, we should never hear of the *Transubstantiation*,

tiation, and other ridiculous Fables of Ch. 1. the Church of *Rome*; nor of any of the *Eastern Ordures*, almost all receiv'd into this *Western Sink*: Nor should we be ever banter'd with the *Lutheran Impagation*, or the *Ubiquity* it has produc'd, as one Monster ordinarily begets another. And tho the *Socinians* disown this Practice, I am mistaken if either they or the *Arians* can make their Notions of a *dignifi'd and Creature-God capable of Divine Worship*, appear more reasonable than the Extravagancies of other Sects touching the Article of the *Trinity*.

3. In short, this Doctrine is the known Refuge of some Men, when they are at a loss in explaining any Passage of the Word of God. Let they should appear to others less knowing than they would be thought, they make nothing of fathering that upon the secret Counsels of the Almighty, or the Nature of the 'Ling, which is, it may be, the Effect of Inaccurate Reasoning, Unskilfulness in the Tongues, or Ignorance of History. But more commonly it is the Consequence of *early Impressions*, which they dare seldom

Sect.II. soon afterwards correct by more free  
 and riper Thoughts : So desiring to be  
 1 Tim.1.7. *Teachers of the Law, and understanding*  
*neither what they say, nor those things*  
*which they affirm, they obtrude upon us*  
 Mat. 15.9. *for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.*

And truly well they may ; for if we once admit this Principle, I know not what we can deny that is told us in the Name of the Lord. This Doctrine, I must remark it too, does highly concern us of the *Laity* ; for however it came to be first establish'd, the *Clergy* (always excepting such as deserve it) have not been since wanting to themselves, but improv'd it so far as not only to make the plainest, but the most trifling things in the World *mysterious*, that we might constantly depend upon them for the Explication. And nevertheless, they must not, if they could, explain them to us, without ruining their own Design, let them never so fairly pretend it. But, overlooking all Observations proper for this Place, let us enter upon the immediate Examen of the Opinion it self.

O 4. The first thing I shall insist upon is, that if any Doctrine of the *New Testa-*

Testament be contrary to Reason, we Ch. 1. have no manner of Idea of it. To say, for instance, that *a Ball is white and black at once*, is to say just nothing; for these Colours are so incompatible in the same Subject, as to exclude all Possibility of a real positive Idea or Conception. So to say, as the Papists, that *Children dying before Baptism are damn'd without Pain*, signifies nothing at all: For if they be intelligent Creatures in the other World, to be eternally excluded God's Presence, and the Society of the Blessed, must prove ineffable Torment to them: But if they think they have no Understanding, then they are not capable of Damnation in their Sense; and so they should not say they are in *Limbo-Dungeon*, but that either they had no Souls, or were annihilated; which (had it been true, as they can never shew) would be reasonable enough, and easily conceiv'd. Now if we have no Ideas of a thing, it is certainly but lost Labour for us to trouble our selves about it: For what I don't conceive, can no more give me right Notions of God, or influence my Actions, than

a

Sect. II. a Prayer deliver'd in an unknown  
 ~~~ Tongue can excite my Devotion : If  
 1 Cor. 14. the Trumpet gives an uncertain Sound,
 8, 9. who shall prepare himself to the Battle ?
 And except Words easy to be understood
 be utter'd, how shall it be known what is
 spoken ? Syllables, tho never so well
 put together, if they have not Ideas
 fix'd to them, are but *Words spoken in*
 Ver. 9. *the Air* ; and cannot be the Ground of
 Rom. 12. 1. a *reasonable Service*, or Worship.

5. If any should think to evade the
 Difficulty by saying, that the Ideas of
 certain Doctrines may be contrary in-
 deed to common Notions, yet consist-
 ent with themselves, and I know
 not what supra-intellectual Truths, he's
 but just where he was. But supposing
 a little that the thing were so ; it still
 follows, that ~~none~~ can understand these
 Doctrines except their Perceptions be
 communicated to him in an extra-
 ordinary manner, as by new Powers and
 Organs. And then too, others cannot
 be edifi'd by what is discours'd of 'em,
 unless they enjoy the same Favour. So
 that if I would go preach the Gospel
 to the *Wild Indians*, I must expect the
 Ideas of my Words should be, I know
 now

not how, infus'd into their Souls in Ch. 1. order to apprehend me: and according to this Hypothesis, they could no more, without a Miracle, understand my Speech than the chirping of Birds; and if they knew not the Meaning of my ^{1 Cor. 14.} Voice, I should even to them be a Barbarian, notwithstanding I spoke ^{11.} *Mysteries* Ver. 2. in the Spirit. But what do they mean by consisting with themselves, yet not with our common Notions? *Four* may be call'd *Five* in Heaven; but so the Name only is chang'd, the Thing remains still the same. And since we cannot in this World know any thing but by our common Notions, how shall we be sure of this pretended Consistency between our present seeming Contradictions, and the Theology of the World to come? For as 'tis by Reason we arrive at the Certainty of God's own Existence, so we cannot otherwise discern his *Revelations* but by their Conformity with our natural Notices of him, which is in so many words, to agree with our common Notions.

6. The next thing I shall remark is, That those, who stick not to say they could believe a downright Contradiction

Sect.II. *to Reason, did they find it contain'd in the Scripture,* do justify all Absurdities whatsoever; and, by opposing one Light to another, undeniably make God the Author of all Incertitude. The very Supposition, that Reason might authorize one thing, and the Spirit of God another, throws us into inevitable *Scepticism*; for we shall be at a perpetual Uncertainty which to obey: Nay, we can never be sure which is which. For the Proof of the Divinity of *Scripture* depending upon Reason, if the clear Light of the one might be any way contradicted, how shall we be convinc'd of the Infallibility of the other? Reason may err in this Point as well as in any thing else; and we have no particular Promise it shall not, no more than the *Papists* that their Senses may not deceive them in every thing as well as in *Transubstantiation*. To say it bears witness to it self, is equally to establish the *Alcoran* or the *Poran*. And 'twere a notable Argument to tell a *Heathen*, that the *Church* has declar'd it, when all Societies will say as much for themselves, if we take their word for it. Besides, it

it may be, he would ask whence the Ch. 1.  Church had Authority to decide this Matter? And if it should be answer'd from the *Scripture*, a thousand to one but he would divert himself with this Circle. You must believe that the *Scripture* is Divine, because the *Church* has so determin'd it, and the *Church* has this deciding Authority from the *Scripture*. 'Tis doubted if this Power of the *Church* can be prov'd from the Passages alledg'd to that purpose; but the *Church* it self (a Party concern'd) affirms it. Hey-day! are not these eternal Rounds very exquisite Inventions to giddy and entangle the Unthinking and the Weak?

7. But if we believe the *Scripture* to be Divine, not upon its own bare Assertion, but from a real Testimony consisting in the Evidence of the things contain'd therein; from undoubted Effects, and not from Words and Letters; what is this but to prove it by *Reason*? It has in it self, I grant, the brightest Characters of *Divinity*: But 'tis *Reason* finds them out, examines them, and by its Principles approves and pronounces them sufficient; which

D order-

Sect. II. orderly begets in us an Acquiescence of *Faith* or Perswafion. Now if Particulars be thus severely listed ; if not only the Doctrine of *Christ* and his *Apostles* be consider'd, but also their Lives, Predictions, Miracles, and Deaths ; surely all this Labour would be in vain, might we upon any account dispense with Contradictions. O ! blessed and commodious System, that dischargest at one stroak those trouble-some Remarks about History, Language, figurative and literal Senfes, Scope of the Writer, Circumstances, and other Helps of Interpretation ! We judg of a Man's Wisdom and Learning by his Actions, and his Discourses ; but God, who we are assur'd *Acts 14.17. has not left himself without a Witness*, must have no Privileges above the maddest Enthusiast, or the *Devil* himself, at this rate.

8. But a Veneration for the very Words of God will be pretended : This we are pleas'd with ; for we know *Num. 23. 19. that God is not a Man that he should lie.* But the Question is not about the Words, but their Sense, which must be ever worthy of their Author, and there-

therefore according to the Genius of all Ch. 1. Speech, figuratively interpreted, when occasion requires it. Otherwise, under pretence of *Faith in the Word of God*, the highest Follies and Blasphemies may be deduc'd from the Letter of *Scripture*; as, that God is subject to Passions, is the Author of Sin, that *Christ* is a Rock, was actually guilty of and defil'd with our Transgressions, that we are Worms or Sheep, and no Men. And if a Figure be admitted in these Passages, why not, I pray, in all Expressions of the like Nature, when there appears an equal Necessity for it?

9. It may be demanded why I have so long insisted upon this Article, since that none expressly makes *Scripture* and *Reason* contradictory, was acknowledg'd before? But in the same place mention is made of some who hold, that *they may seem directly to clash*; and that tho' we cannot reconcile them together, yet that we are bound to acquiesce in the Decisions of the former. A *seeming* Contradiction is to us as much as a *real* one; and our Respect for the *Scripture* does not require us to

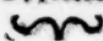
D 2 grant

Sect. II. grant any such in it, but rather to conclude, that we are ignorant of the right Meaning when a Difficulty occurs; and so to suspend our Judgment concerning it, till with suitable Helps and Industry we discover the Truth. As for acquiescing in what a Man understands not, or cannot reconcile to his Reason, they know best the fruits of it that practise it. For my part, I'm a Stranger to it, and cannot reconcile my self to such a Principle. On the contrary, I am pretty sure he pretends in vain to convince the Judgment, who explains not the Nature of the Thing. A Man may give his verbal Assent to he knows not what, out of Fear, Superstition, Indifference, Interest, and the like feeble and unfair Motives: but as long as he conceives not what he believes, he cannot sincerely acquiesce in it, and remains depriv'd of all solid Satisfaction. He is constantly perplex'd with Scruples not to be remov'd by his implicite Faith; and so is ready to be shaken, and carry'd away with every wind of Doctrine. I will believe because I will believe, that is, because I'm in the Humour so to do, is the top of his Apology.

Ephes. 4. 14.

logy. Such are unreasonable Men, Ch. 1.
walking after the Vanity of their Minds, *having their Understandings darken'd,* Ephes. 4.
being Strangers to the Life of God ^{17, 18.}
through the Ignorance that is in them,
because of the Hardness of their Hearts.
But he that comprehends a thing, is as
sure of it as if he were himself the Au-
thor. He can never be brought to
suspect his Profession ; and, if he be
honest, will always render a pertinent
account of it to others.

10. The natural Result of what has
been said is, That to believe the Divi-
nity of *Scripture*, or the Sense of any
Passage thereof, without rational
Proofs, and an evident Consistency, is
a blameable Credulity, and a temera-
rious Opinion, ordinarily grounded
upon an ignorant and wilful Disposi-
tion, but more generally maintain'd
out of a gainful Prospect. For we
frequently embrace certain Doctrines
not from any convincing Evidence in
them, but because they serve our De-
signs better than the Truth ; and be-
cause other Contradictions we are not
willing to quit, are better defended by
their means.



C H A P. II.

Of the Authority of REVELATION,
as it regards this Controversy.

11. **A**gainst all that we have been establishing in this Section, the Authority of *Revelation* will be alledg'd with great shew, as if without a Right of silencing or extinguishing REASON, it were altogether useless and impertinent. But if the Distinction I made in the precedent Section, N. 9. be well consider'd, the Weakness of the present Objection will quickly appear, and this Controversy be better understood hereafter. There I said REVELATION was not a necessitating Motive of Assent, but a *Mean of Information*. We should not confound the Way whereby we come to the knowledg of a thing, with the Grounds we have to believe it. A Man may inform me concerning a thousand Matters I never heard of before, and of which I should not as much as think if

I

I were not told ; yet I believe nothing Ch. 2. purely upon his word without *Evi-*
dence in the things themselves. Not the bare Authority of him that speaks, but the clear Conception I form of what he says, is the *Ground of my Persuasion.*

12. If the sincerest Person on Earth should assure me he saw a Cane without two ends, I neither should nor could believe him ; because this Relation plainly contradicts the Idea of a Cane. But if he told me he saw a Staff that, being by chance laid in the Earth, did after some time put forth Sprigs and Branches, I could easily rely upon his Veracity ; because this no way contradicts the Idea of a Staff, nor transcends Possibility.

13. I say *Possibility* ; for *Omnipotency* it self can do no more. They impose upon themselves and others, who require Assent to things contradictory, because God, say they, *can do all things*, and it were *limiting of his Power to affirm the contrary.* Very good ! we heartily believe God can do all things : But that meer **NOTHING** should be the Object of his Power, the very *Omnipotency* alledg'd will not permit us to

Sect. II. conceive. And that every *Contradiction*, which is a Synonym for *Impossibility*, is *pure nothing*, we have already sufficiently demonstrated. To say, for example, that *a thing is extended and not extended, is round and square at once*, is to say *nothing*; for these Ideas destroy one another, and cannot subsist together in the same Subject. But when we clearly perceive a perfect Agreement and Connection between the Terms of any Proposition, we then conclude it possible because intelligible: So I understand God may render immediately solid, what has been hitherto fluid; make present Beings cease to exist or change their Forms; and *call*

Rom.4.17. those things that are not, as tho they were.

When we say then, *that nothing is impossible with God*, or that he can do all things, we mean whatever is possible in it self, however far above the Power of Creatures to effect.

14. Now, such is the Nature of a Matter of Fact, that tho it may be conceiv'd possible enough, yet he only can with Assurance assert its Existence who is himself the Author, or by some *Means of Information* comes first to the

the certain knowldg of it. That there Ch. 2.
was such an Island as *Jamaica*, no Eu-
ropean could ever reasonably deny :
And yet that it was precisely situated
in such a Latitude, was water'd with
those Rivers, cloth'd with these
Woods, bore this Grain, produc'd that
Plant, no *English-man* before the Dis-
covery of *America*, could positively
affirm.

15. Thus God is pleas'd to reveal
to us in *Scripture* several wonderful
Matters of Fact, as the *Creation of the*
World, the *last Judgment*, and many
other important Truths, which no Man
left to himself could ever imagine, no
more than any of my fellow-Creatures
can be sure of my private Thoughts :

For who knoweth the things of a Man ^{1 Cor. 2.11.}
save the Spirit of a Man that is in him?
even so the things of God knoweth none
but the Spirit of God. But as *secret things*
belong unto the Lord ; so *those things* ^{Deut. 29.}
which are reveal'd, belong unto us and to
our Children. Yet, as we discours'd be-
fore, we do not receive them only be-
cause they are reveal'd : For *besides the*
infallible Testimony of the Revelation
from all requisite Circumstances, we must
see

Sect.II. see in its Subject the indisputable Characters of **DIVINE WISDOM** and **SOUND REASON**; which are the only Marks we have to distinguish the Oracles and Will of God, from the Impostures and Traditions of Men.

16. *Whoever reveals any thing, that is, whoever tells us something we did not know before, his Words must be intelligible, and the Matter possible.* This RULE holds good, let God or Man be the Revealer. If we count that Person a Fool who requires our Assent to what is manifestly incredible, how dare we blasphemously attribute to *the most perfect Being*, what is an acknowledg'd Defect in one of our selves? As for unintelligible Relations, we can no more believe them from the Revelation of God, than from that of Man; for the conceiv'd Ideas of things are the only Subjects of Believing, Denying, Approving, and every other Act of the Understanding: Therefore *all Matters reveal'd by God or Man, must be equally intelligible and possible*; so far both Revelations agree. But in this they differ, that tho the Revelation of Man should be thus qualifi'd, yet *he may impose*

impose upon me as to the Truth of the Ch. 2. thing ; whereas what God is pleas'd to ~~discover~~ discover to me is not only clear to my Reason, (without which his Revelation could make me no wiser) but likewise *it is always true*. A Man, for Example, acquaints me that he has found a Treasure : This is plain and possible, but he may easily deceive me. God assures me, that he has form'd Man of Earth : This is not only possible to God, and to me very intelligible ; but the thing is also most certain, *God not being capable to deceive me, as Man is*. We are then to expect the same degree of *Perspicuity* from God as from Man, tho more of *Certitude* from the first than the last.

17. This Reason persuades, and the Scriptures expressly speak it. Those *Prophets* or *Dreamers* were to be ston'd ^{Deut. 13.} to Death that should go about to seduce the People from the Worship of One God to * *Polytheism*, tho they should confirm their Doctrine by *Signs and Wonders*. And tho a Prophet spoke in the Name of the Lord, yet if the thing prophes-

* *The Service of many Gods.*

Sect. II. prophes'd did not come to pass, it was to
 ~~~ be a rational Sign he spoke presumptu-  
 Deut. 18. oufly of himself, and not of God. It  
 21, 22. was reveal'd to the Prophet Jeremy in  
 Prison, that his Uncle's Son would sell  
 Jer. 32.7,8 his Field to him, but he did not conclude  
 it to be the Word of the Lord till his  
 Kinsman actually came to strike the Bar-  
 gain with him. The Virgin MARY, tho of that Sex that's least Proof a-  
 gainst Flattery and Superstition, did  
 not implicitly believe she should bear a  
 Child that was to be call'd the Son of the  
 most High, and of whose Kingdom there  
 should be no end, till the Angel gave her  
 a satisfactory Answer to the strongest  
 Objection that could be made: Nor  
 did she then conclude (so unlike was  
 she to her present Worshippers) it  
 should unavoidably come to pass; but  
 humbly acknowledging the Possibility,  
 and her own Unworthiness, she qui-  
 etly wish'd and expected the Event.

Ver. 38.

18. In how many places are we ex-  
 Mat. 7. 14. horted to beware of false Prophets and  
 2 Tim. 3. Teachers, Seducers and Deceivers? We  
 13. Tit. 1. 10. are not only to prove or try all things,  
 1 Thess. 5. 1. and to hold fast that which is best, but  
 21. 1 Joh. 4. 1. also to try the Spirits whether they be of  
 God.

God. But how shall we try? how Ch. 2. shall we discern? Not *as the Horse and Mule which have no Understanding*, but <sup>Psal. 32.9.</sup> *as circumspect and wise Men, judging* <sup>Eph. 5.15.</sup> *what is said.* In a word, it was from clear and weighty Reasons, both as to Fact and Matter, and not by a blind Obedience, that the Men of God of old embrac'd his Revelations, which on the like Account we are willing to receive of their hands. I am not ignorant how some boast they are strongly perswaded *by the illuminating and efficacious Operation of the Holy Spirit*, and that they neither have nor approve other Reasons of their *FAITH*: But we shall endeavour in its proper place to undeceive them; for no Adversary, how absurd or trifling soever, ought to be superciliously disregarded by an unfeign'd Lover of Men and Truth. So far of *REVELATION*; only in making it a *Mean of Information*, I follow *Paul* himself, who tells the *Corinthians*, that *he cannot profit them except he speaks to them by Revelation, or by* <sup>1 Cor. 14.6.</sup> *Knowledg, or by Prophesying, or by Doctrine.*

C H A P.

## C H A P. III.

That by CHRISTIANITY was intended a Rational and Intelligible Religion; prov'd from the Miracles, Method and Stile of the New Testament.

19. **W**HAT we discours'd of REASON before, and REVELATION now, being duly weigh'd, all the Doctrines and Precepts of the New Testament (if it be indeed Divine) must consequently agree with *Natural Reason*, and our own ordinary Ideas. This every considerate and wel-dispos'd Person will find by the careful perusal of it: And whoever undertakes this Task, will confess the Gospel *not to be hidden from us, nor afar off, but very nigh us, in our Mouths, and in our Hearts.* It affords the most illustrious Examples of close and perspicuous Ratiocination conceivable; which is incumbent on me in the

Deut. 30.  
11, 14.

the Explication of its MYSTERIES, Ch. 3. to demonstrate. And tho the Evidence of Christ's Doctrine might claim the Approbation of the *Gentiles*, and its Conformity with the Types and Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, with all the Marks of the *MESSIAH* concurring in his Person, might justly challenge the Assent of his Countrymen; yet to leave no room for doubt, he proves his Authority and Gospel by such Works, and Miracles as the stiff-neck'd *Jews* themselves could not deny to be Divine. *Nicodemus* says to him, *Joh. 3. 2.* *No Man can do these Miracles which thou do'st, except God be with him.* Some of the Pharisees acknowledg'd *no Sinner Joh. 9. 16.* *could do such things.* And others, that *they exceeded the Power of the Devil. Joh. 10. 21.*

20. JESUS himself appeals to his very Enemies, ready to stone him for pretended Blasphemy, saying; *If I do Joh. 10. not the Works of my Father, believe me 37, 38.* *not: But if I do, believe not me, believe the Works; that you may know, and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him:* That is, believe not rashly on me, and so give a Testimony to my Works; but search the *Scriptures*, which testify of the

Sect. II. the *Messiah*; consider the Works I do,   
 whether they be such as become God, and are attributed to him: If they be, then conclude and believe that I am he, &c. In effect, several of the Peo-  
 ple said, that *Christ* when he should come could do no greater Wonders; and many of the Jews believ'd, when they saw the Miracles which he did.

Heb. 2. 3, 4. 21. How shall we escape, says the Apostle, if we neglect so great a *Salvation*, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirm'd unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the *Holy Spirit*, according to his own *Will*? Those who heard *Christ*, the Author of our Religion, speak, and saw the Wonders which he wrought, renounce 2 Cor. 4. 2. all the hidden things of *Dishonesty*, all *Craftiness* and *deceitful handling* of the *Word of God*: And that they manifest nothing but *Truth*, they commend themselves to every *Man's Conscience*, that is, they appeal to every *Man's Reason*, in the *Sight of God*. Peter exhorts 1 Pet. 3. 15. Christians to be ready always to give an Answer to every one that asks them a Reason of their *Hope*. Now to what purpose

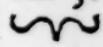
purpose serv'd all these Miracles, all Ch. 3. these Appeals, if no Regard was to be had of Mens Understandings? if the Doctrines of *Christ* were incomprehensible, contradictory; or were we oblig'd to believe reveal'd Non-jense? Now if these Miracles be true, *Christianity* must consequently be intelligible; and if false, (which our Adversaries will not grant) they can be then no Arguments against us.

22. But to insist no longer upon such Passages, all Men will own the Verity I defend, if they read the sacred Writings with that Equity and Attention that is due to meer Humane Works: Nor is there any different Rule to be follow'd in the Interpretation of *Scripture* from what is common to all other Books. Whatever unprejudic'd Person shall use those Means, will find them notorious Deceivers, or much deceiv'd themselves, who maintain the *New Testament* is written without any Order or certain Scope, but just as Matters came into the *Apostles Heads*, whether transported with Enthusiastick Fits, (as some will have it) or, according to others,

E for

Sect. II. for lack of good Sense and a liberal  
Education. I think I may justly say, that they are Strangers to true Method, who complain of this Confusion and Disorder. But the Proof of the Case depends not upon Generalities: Tho, whenever it is prov'd, I will not promise that every one shall find a Justification of the *particular Method* he was taught, or he has chosen, to follow. *To defend any PART is not my business, but to discover the TRUTH.*

23. The Facility of the GOSPEL is not confin'd only to Method; for the Stile is also most easy, most natural, and in the common Dialect of those to whom it was immediately consign'd. Should any preach in Xenophon's strain to the present Greeks, or in correct English to the Country-People in Scotland, 'twould cost them much more Time and Pains to learn the very Words, than the Knowledg of the Things denoted by them. Of old, as well as in our time, the Jews understood Hebrew worse than the Tongues of those Regions where they dwelt. No Pretences therefore can be

be drawn from the Obscurity of the Ch. 3.  
Language in favour of the *irrational*   
*Hypothesis*: for all Men are suppos'd  
to understand the daily Use of their  
Mother-Tongue; whereas the Stile of  
the Learned is unintelligible to the  
Vulgar. And the plainest Authors  
that write as they speak, without the  
Disguise of pompous Elegance, have  
ever been accounted the best by all  
good Judges. It is a visible Effect of  
Providence that we have in our Hands  
the Monuments of the *Old Testament*,  
which in the *New* are always suppos'd,  
quoted, or alluded to. Nor is that all,  
for the *Jewish* Service and Customs  
continue to this day. If this had been  
true of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, we  
should be furnish'd with those Helps  
to understand aright many unknown  
Particulars of their Religion, which  
make us Rulers and Teachers in *Israel*.  
Besides, we have the *Talmud*, and o-  
ther Works of the *Rabbins*, which,  
however otherwise uselefs, give us no  
small Light into the antient Rites and  
Language. And if after all we should  
be at a loss about the Meaning of any  
Expression, we ought rather to charge

Sect. II. it upon Distance of Time, and the want of more Books in the same Tongue, than to attribute it to the Nature of the thing, or the Ignorance of the Author, who might be easily understood by his Country-men and Contemporaries. But no Truth is to be establish'd, nor Falshood confuted from such Passages, no more than any can certainly divine his Fortune from the Sound of *Bow-bell*.

24. If any object, that the *Gospel* is penn'd with little or no Ornament, that there are no choice of Words, nor studi'd Expressions in it; the Accusation is true, and the Apostles themselves acknowledg it: nor is there a more palpable Demonstration of their having design'd to be understood by all. *I came not to you*, says *Paul*, with Excellency of Speech, or *Wisdom*, declaring unto you the Testimony of God. *My Speech and my Preaching was not with enticing Words of Humane Wisdom*, but in Demonstration, or Conviction of the Spirit or Mind, and in Power or Efficacy. This he speaks in reference to the *Philosophers* and *Orators* of those Times, whose Elocution, 'tis confess'd, was

*ver. 4.*

was curious; and Periods elaborate, Ch. 3. apt to excite the Admiration of the  Hearers, but not to satisfy their Reasons; charming indeed their Senses whilst in the *Theatre*, or the *Temple*, but making them neither the better at home, nor the wiser abroad.

25. These Men, as well as many of their *modern Successors*, were fond enough of their own ridiculous Systems, *to count the things of God Foolishness*, <sup>1 Cor. 2.</sup> because they did not agree with their precarious and sensual Notions; because every Sentence was not wrapp'd up in *Mystery*, and garnish'd with a Figure: not considering that only false or trivial Matters need the Assistance of alluring Harangues to perplex or amuse. But they were Enemies and Strangers to the Simplicity of Truth. *All their Study*, as we took notice, *lay in tickling the Passions of the People at their Pleasure with bombast Eloquence, and apish Gesticulations*. They boasted their Talent of persuading for or against any thing. And as he was esteem'd the best *Orator* that made the worst Cause appear the most equitable before the Judges, so he was the best

Sect. II. best *Philosopher* that could get the  
 wildest Paradox to pass for Demon-  
 stration. They were only concern'd  
 about their own Glory and Gain, which  
 they could not otherwise support, but  
 (according to an Artifice that never  
 fails, and therefore ever practis'd) by  
*imposing upon the People with their Au-*  
*thority and Sophistry, and under pretence*  
*of instructing, dexterously detaining them*  
*in the grossest Ignorance.*

26. But the Scope of the *Apostles*  
 was very different: Piety towards God,  
 and the Peace of Mankind, was their  
 Gain, and *Christ* and his *Gospel* their  
 Glory; they came not magnifying nor  
 exalting themselves; not imposing but  
 declaring their Doctrine: they did not  
 confound and mislead, but convince  
 the Mind; they were employ'd to  
 dispel Ignorance, to eradicate Super-  
 stition, to propagate Truth, and Re-  
 Luk. 4.18. *formation of Manners; to preach De-*  
*liverance to Captives, (i. e.) the En-*  
*joyment of Christian Liberty to the*  
*Slaves of the Levitical, and Pagan*  
*Priesthoods; and to declare Salvation*  
*to repenting Sinners.*

27. I shall add here some of the Ch. 3. Characters which *David* gives of the Law and Word of God, that we may admit nothing as the Will of Heaven but what is agreeable to them: *The Law of the Lord, says he, is perfect, converting the Soul. The Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the Simple. The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the Heart. The Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the Eyes. The Fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. The Judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. I have more Understanding than all my Teachers, for thy Testimonies are my Meditation. I understand more than the Antients, because I keep thy Precepts. Thy Word is a Lamp unto my Feet, and a Light unto my Path.* The New Testament is so full of this Language, and the Contents of it are every where so conformable to it, that I shall refer the Reader to the particular Discussion of the Whole in the second Discourse. But I must remark in the mean time that not a Syllable of this Language is true, if any Contradictions seeming or real be admitted in Scripture. As much

Sect. II. may be said of *Mysteries*; but we shall  
 ~~~ talk of that by and by.

C H A P. IV.

Objections answer'd, drawn from
 the Pravity of Humane REA-
 SON.



28. **T**HERE remains one Objection yet, upon which some lay a mighty Stress, tho' it's like to do them little Service. Granting, say they, the GOSPEL to be as reasonable as you pretend, yet *corrupt and deprav'd Reason can neither discern nor receive Divine Verities*. Ay, but that proves not Divine Verities to be contrary to *sound Reason*. But they maintain that *no Man's Reason is sound*. Wherefore I hope so to state this Question, as to cut off all Occasion of Dispute from judicious and peaceable Men. *Reason taken for the Principle of Discourse in us, or more particularly for that Faculty every one has of judging of his Ideas*

Ideas according to their Agreement or Ch. 4. Disagreement, and so of loving what seems good unto him, and hating what he thinks evil: Reason, I say, in this Sense is whole and entire in every one whose Organs are not accidentally indispos'd. 'Tis from it that we are accounted Men; and we could neither inform others, nor receive Improvement our selves, any more than *Brutes*, without it.

29. But if by *Reason* be understood a constant right Use of these Faculties, *viz.* If a *Man* never judges but according to clear *Perceptions*, desires nothing but what is truly good for him, nor avoids but what is certainly evil: Then, I confess, it is extreamly corrupt. We are too prone to frame wrong *Conceptions*, and as erroneous Judgments of things. We generally covet what flatters our *Senses*, without distinguishing noxious from innocent *Pleasures*; and our *Hatred* is as partial. We gratify our *Bodies* so much as to meditate little, and think very grossly of spiritual, or abstracted *Matters*. We are apt to indulge our *Inclinations*, which we term *to follow Nature*: so 1 Cor. 2.14.

that

Sect. II. that the ~~† natural Man~~, that is, he that gives the swing to his Appetites, counts Divine Things mere Folly, calls Religion a feverish Dream of superstitious Heads, or a politick Trick invented by States-men to aw the credulous Vulgar. For as *they that walk after the Flesh mind the things thereof*, so their carnal Wisdom is Enmity against God.

Rom. 8. 5, 7. *Heb. 12.1. Sin easily besets us. There is a Law in our Members or Body, warring against the Law of our Minds or Reason. And when we would do Good, Evil is present with us.*

Rom. 7.23. *Ver. 21. If thus we become stupid and unfit for earthly Speculations, how shall we believe*

Joh. 3.12. *when we are told of heavenly things?*

30. But these Disorders are so far from being Reason, that nothing can be more directly contrary to it. We lie under no necessary Fate of sinning. There is no Defect in our Understandings but those of our own Creation, that is to say, *vicious Habits easily contracted, but difficultly reform'd.* 'Tis just with us as with the Drunkard, whose

~~† Ψυχής constantly signifies the animal, and never the natural State of Man. It should be in this Place translated sensual, as it is very rightly, Jam. 3.15, and Jude, v. 19.~~

whose *I cannot give over Drinking* is a Ch. 4. deliberate *I will not*. For upon a Wa-
ger, or for a Reward, he can forbear his Cups a Day, a Month, a Year, ac-
cording as the Consideration of the Value or Certainty of the expected Gain do's influence him. *Let no Man* Jam. 1. 13,
therefore say when he is tempted, I am ^{14.} *tempted of God*; *for as God cannot be tempted to Evil, so neither tempteth he any Man*: *But every Man is tempted when he is drawn away, and entic'd of his own Lust.*

31. Supposing a natural Impotency to reason well, we could no more be liable to Condemnation for not keeping the Commands of God, than those to whom the *Gospel* was never revealed for not believing on *Christ*: *For Rom. 10.*
how shall they call on him in whom they have not believ'd? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? Were our reasoning Faculties imper-
fect, or we not capable to employ them rightly, there could be no Possi-
bility of our understanding one anoth-
er in Millions of things, where the stock of our Ideas should prove un-
avoidably unequal, or our Capacities different.

Sect. II. different. But 'tis the Perfection of our
Reason and Liberty that makes us de-
serve Rewards and Punishments. We
are perswaded that *all our Thoughts are*
entirely free, we can expend the Force of
Words, compare Ideas, distinguish clear
from obscure Conceptions, suspend our
Judgments about Uncertainties, and yield
only to Evidence. In a word, the Deli-
berations we use about our Designs,
and the Choice to which we deter-
mine our selves at last, do prove us the
free Disposers of all our Actions. Now
what is *found Reason* except this be it?
Doubtless it is. And no *Evangelical*,
or other knowable Truth can prove
insuperable, or monstrous to him that
uses it after this manner. But when
we abuse it against it self, and enslave
it to our debauch'd Imaginations, it is
averse from all Good. We are so
habituated, I confess, to precarious
and hasty Conclusions, that without
great Constancy and Exercise we can-
not recover our innate Freedom, *nor*
do well, having accustom'd our selves so
much to Evil. But tho' tis said in Scrip-
ture, that *we will neither know nor un-
derstand*; 'tis there also said, that we
may

may amend our *Ways*, turn from our *Ch. 4.*
Iniquity, and choose *Life*. Encoura-
gements are propos'd to such as do so.
We can, upon serious Reflection, see
our *Faults*, and find that what we
held most unreasonable, did only ap-
pear so from *superficial Disquisitions*,
or *want of necessary Helps*; from *De-
ference to Authority*, and *Principles taken
upon Trust*; from *irregular Inclinations*
and *Self-interest*, or the *Hatred of a Party*.

32. But notwithstanding all this,
some are at a world of Pains to rob
themselves (if they could) of their
Liberty or *Freewill*, the noblest and most
useful of all our *Faculties*, the only
thing we can properly call ours, and the
only thing that neither *Power* nor *For-
tune* can take from us. Under whatever
Vail these Men endeavour to hide
their *Folly*, yet they are engag'd in it
by extreme *Pride* and *Self-love*: For,
not willing to own their *Ignorance* and
Miscarriages, (which proceed from *Pa-
ssion*, *Sloth*, or *Inconsideration*) they would
remove all the *Blame* from their *Will*,
and charge it upon a *natural Impotency*
not in their *Power* to cure. Thus they
ingeniously cheat themselves, and
chuse

Sect. II. chuse rather to be rank'd in the same Condition with Brutes or Machines, than be oblig'd to acknowledg their humane Frailties, and to mend.

33. Since therefore the Perfection or Soundness of our Reason is so evident to our selves, and so plainly contain'd in *Scripture*, however wrested by some ignorant Persons, *we should labour to acquire Knowldg with more confident Hopes of Success.* Why should we entertain such mean and unbecoming Thoughts, as if Truth, like the Almighty, dwelt in Light inaccessible, and not to be discover'd by the Sons of Men? Things are always the same, how different soever the Conceptions of Men about them may be; and what another did not, I may happily find out. That nothing escap'd the Sight of former Ages is a Tale to be told where one Person only speaks, and no Body present must contradict him. The Slips and Errors which are taken notice of in the World every Day, serve only to put us in mind that many able Men did not examine the Truth with that Order and Application they should or might have done.

There

There are a thousand things in our Ch. 4. Power to know, of which, through ~~the~~ Prejudice or Neglect, we may be, and frequently remain ignorant all our Lives ; and innumerable Difficulties may be made by imagining MYSTERIES where there are none, or by conceiving too discouraging and unjust an Opinion of our own Abilities : whereas, by a Parity of Reason, we may hope to outdo all that outdid others before us, as Posterity may exceed both. *'Tis no Presumption therefore for us to endeavour setting things in a better Light ;* as to know what we are able to perform is not *Pride*, but foolishly to presume none else can equal us, when we are all upon the same Level : *For who maketh thee to differ from another ? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive ? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not receiv'd it ?* Have we not all the same sure and certain Promises of Light and Assistance from above, as well as the Privilege of Reason in common ? *If any lack Wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives to all liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.*

34. To

Sect.II. 34. To conclude, let no Body think to be excus'd by this imaginary *Corruption*, but learn from the *Scripture*, our infallible Oracle, that the *Gospel*, if it be the Word of God, is only contrary to the Opinions and Wishes of

2 Pet. 3. 3. lewd Men, *that love to walk after their own Lusts*; of those that speak Evil of the things which they understand not, and

Jude, v. 10. *debauch themselves in what they know in common with Brutes*. It is hid to them

2 Cor. 4. whose Minds are blinded by the God of this World; and to those who live by

3, 4. the Ignorance and simple Credulity of their Brethren. To be brief, It is contrary to the false Reasoning of all that will not know what it is to reflect or consider; but it is not above the Possibility of their Reason when they shall better improve their Faculties. The Creation of the World was against the System of *Aristotle*, the Immortality of the Soul against the Hypothesis of *Epicurus*, and the || Liberty of

|| How the absolute Liberty we experience in our selves, is consistent with God's Omnipotence and our Dependence on him, shall in due Place be consider'd.

of the Will was impugn'd by many Ch. 4.
antient Philosophers. But is this to be u
contrary to Reason? Have not these
Men been quite baffl'd by as very
Heathens as themselves? And are not
their other Errors since detected and
exploded by most of the Learned?
Besides, they wanted a principal *mean*
of Information, viz. *REVELATION*.

F SECT.

S E C T. III.

That there is nothing MYSTERIOUS, or ABOVE Reason in the GOSPEL.

1. **W**E come at length to enquire whether any *Doctrine of the GOSPEL* be *ABOVE*, *tho not contrary to REASON*. This Expression is taken in a twofold Signification. First, It denotes a thing intelligible of it self, but so cover'd by figurative Words, Types and Ceremonies, that *Reason* cannot penetrate the Vail, nor see what is under it till it be remov'd. Secondly, It is made to signify a thing of its own Nature inconceivable, and not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Faculties and Ideas, tho it be never so clearly reveal'd. In both these Senfes *to be above*

above Reason is the same thing with Ch. 1.
MYSTERY; and, in effect, they are convertible Terms in *Divinity*.

CHAP. I.

The History and Signification of MYSTERY in the Writings of the GENTILES.

2. **W**HAT is meant by *REASON* we have already largely discours'd; but to understand aright what the word *MYSTERY* imports, we must trace the Original of it as far back as the Theology of the antient *Gentiles*, whereof it was a considerable Term. *Those Nations*, who (as *Paul* elegantly describes them) *professing themselves wise, became Fools*; ^{Rom. 1.} *22, 23, 25.* *who chang'd the Glory of the incorruptible God into the Image and Likeness of corruptible Man, of Birds, of Beasts, and creeping things*; *who turn'd the Truth of God into a Lie, and worship'd the Creature as well as (and sometimes more than) the Creator*: *Those Nations, I*

F 2 say,

Sect. 3. say, ashamed or afraid to exhibit their *Religion* naked to the view of all indifferently, disguis'd it with various Ceremonies, Sacrifices, Plays, &c. making the superstitious People believe that admirable things were adumbrated by these Externals. The *Priests*, but very rarely, and then obscurely, taught in publick, pretending the Injunctions of their *Divinities* to the contrary, lest their Secrets, forsooth, should be expos'd to the Profanation of the Ignorant, or Violation of the Impious. They perform'd the highest Acts of their Worship, consisting of ridiculous, obscene, or inhumane Rites, in the inmost Recesses of *Temples* or *Groves* consecrated for that purpose: And it was inexpiable Sacrilege for any to * enter these but such as had a special Mark and Privilege, or as much as to ask Questions about what pass'd in them. All the Excluded were for that Reason stil'd the *PROFANE*, as those not in Orders with us the *LAITY*.

3. But

* ——— Procul, O procul este Profani!
 Conclamat vates, totoq; absistite Iuco. *Virg. l. 6.*
Aenid. v. 259. Callimach. *Hymn. in Apol. v. 2.*
Eng's Eng's osis Asteos.

3. But the cunning Priests, who Ch. 1. knew how to turn every thing to their own Advantage, thought fit to *initiate* or instruct certain Persons in the Meaning of their Rites. They gave out that such as died *uninitiated* * wallow'd in infernal Mire, whilst the Purifi'd and *Initiated* dwelt with the Gods; which as well increas'd their Veneration for, as a Desire of enjoying, so great a Happiness. The *Initiated*, after some Years Preparation to make them value what cost so much Time and Patience, were devoutly sworn † never to discover what they saw or heard under Pain of || Death, tho they might discourse of them amongst themselves, lest too

F 3. great

* "Ος ἀμώτθ οὐ καὶ αὐτέλεστε εἰς ἀδελφίκηται, εἰς βορβόρον κεισταις." Ο δὲ κερδασμένθ τε καὶ πετελεσμένθ, εἰποτε ἀριθμόνθ, μεταὶ θιάν αἰποτε. Plat. in Phædon, pag. 59. Edit. Paris. 1578. Τελετῆς οἱ μετεχόντες, αφεὶ τέ τῆς τοῦ βίου τελευτῆς, καὶ τῆς σύμπαντος αἰώνθ, ἡδίους τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχοντες. Isocrat. in Panegyr. Initiaq; ut appellatur, ita re vera principia vitae cognovimus: neq; solum cum laxitia vendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi. Cic. l. 2. de Leg. c. 14.

† Quis Cereris ritus audet vulgare Profanis?

Magnaque Threicio sacra reperta Samo? Orid. l. 2. de Arte Amand. v. 601. Ω ρωμῶς ἐξοργαστικενοι τὰ μυστέα, οὐ τὰ ἀφαγα τοιναντες. Aristid.

¶ Νόμοθ, οὐ ἐκπόνηται τὰ μυστέα τεθνάντας. Soli-
pater in Divis. Quest.

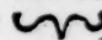
Sect. 3. great a Constraint should tempt them
 to blab the Secret. And so religiously
 they kept this Oath, that some of them,
 after their Conversion to Christianity,
 could hardly be brought to declare
 what pass'd at their *Initiation in Gen-*
tilism. The *Athenians* thought no
 Torments exquisite enough to punish
 * *Diagoras* the Philosopher, for divul-
 ging their *Mysteries*; and not content
 to brand him with *Atheism* for laugh-
 ing at their Weakness, they promis'd
 a Talent as a Reward to any that
 should kill him. 'Twas Death to say
Adonis was a Man; some suffer'd up-
 on that account: And many were torn
 in pieces at the † *Mysteries of Ceres*,
 and the ‡ *Orgies of Bacchus*, for their
 unadvis'd Curiosity.

4. Cre-

* Ηγ. αποκτείνη της υμεν Διαγέρει τὸν μῆλον,
 λαμβάνειν τὰ λαύρια. Aristophanes in Avibus; etiam
 Suidas in voce.

† Acarnanes duo Juvenes per Initiorum dies non
 Initianti Templum Cereris, imprudentes Religionis,
 cum cætera turba ingressi sunt. Facile eos Sermo pro-
 didit, absurdè quædam percunctantes: Deductiq; ad
 Antistites Templi, quum palam esset per errorem in-
 gressos, tanquam ob infandum scelus intersecti sunt.
Livius, lib. 31. cap. 14.

‡ Witness the Story of Pentheus, which afforded the
 Subject of a Tragedy to Euripides.

4. Credible Authors report, that the Ch. i. Priests confess'd to the *Initiated* how , these Mystick Representations were instituted at first in Commemoration of some remarkable Accidents, or to the Honour of some great Persons that oblig'd the World by their Vertues and useful Inventions to pay them such Acknowledgments, But let this be as it will, *Myein* in their Systems signify'd to initiate: *Myesis*, *Initiation*: *Mystes*, a Name afterwards given the Priests, denoted the Person to be *initiated*, who was call'd an * *Epopt* when admitted; and *Mystery* the *Doctrine* in which he *Mysteior.* was *initiated*. As there were several [†] Degrees, so there were different sorts of *Mysteries*. The most famous were the *Samothracian*, the *Eleusinian*, the *Egyptian*, and those of *Bacchus*, commonly known by the name of || *Orgies*;

F 4

tho

* Οι τὰ μυστία παραλαμβάνοντες, λέγονται εὐ αρχῇ μέν μύσται μετα ἐμαυτοῦ ὃ ἐπόπται καὶ ἔφεσι. Scholiast. in Aristophanis Ranas.

† Εστι τὰ μυκεῖ [μυστία] ὅστε περικλεῖστος καὶ περιάγνενος τὰ μεγάλα. Schol. in Plut. Aristophan. Act. 4. Sc. 2.

|| Pars obscura cavis celebrabant Orgia cistis,
Orgia quæ frustra cupiunt audire Profani.
Cat. Epigram. 64. v. 260.

Sect. 3. tho the word is sometimes put for any
of the former.

5. From what has been said it is clear, that they understood by *Mystery* in those Days *a thing intelligible of itself, but so vail'd by others, that it could not be known without special Revelation.* I need not add, that in all the Greek and *Roman* Authors it is constantly put, as a very vulgar Expression, for any thing sacred or profane that is design'dly kept secret, or accidentally obscure. And this is the common Acceptation of it still: for when we cannot see clearly into a Busines, we say it is a *Mystery* to us; and that an obscure or perplex'd Discourse is very *mysterious*. *Mysteries* of State, Sciences and Trades, run all in the same Notion.

6. But many not denying what is so plain, yet being strongly inclin'd out of Ignorance or Passion to maintain what was first introduc'd by the Craft or Superstition of their Fore-fathers, will have some *Christian Doctrines* to be still *mysterious* in the second Sense of the Word, that is, *inconceivable in themselves, however clearly reveal'd.* They think

think a long Prescription will argue it Ch. 1. Folly in any to appear against them, and indeed Custom has made it dangerous. But, slighting so mean Considerations, if I can demonstrate that in the New Testament *Mystery* is always us'd in the first Sense of the Word, or that of the *Gentiles*, viz. for *things naturally very intelligible, but so cover'd by figurative Words or Rites, that Reason could not discover them without special Revelation*; and that the Vail is actually taken away; then it will manifestly follow that the Doctrines so reveal'd cannot now be properly call'd *Mysteries*.

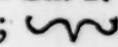
7. This is what I hope to perform in the Sequel of this Section, to the entire Satisfaction of those sincere Christians more concern'd for the Truth than the old or gainful Opinion. Yet I must first remove out of my way certain *common places of cavilling*, with which, not only the raw Beginners of the most implicite Constitution raise a great Dust upon all Occasions, tho *not able to speak of any thing pertinently when joſt'l'd out of the beaten Road*; but truly their venerable Teachers are not ashame'd sometimes to play at this small Game,

Sect. 3. Game, which, they know, rather amuses the Prejudic'd of their own side, than edifies the Adversaries of any sort. I wish there were more even of a well-meaning Zeal without Knowledg, than of Art or Cunning in this Conduct.

C H A P. II.

That nothing ought to be call'd a MYSTERY, because we have not an adequate Idea of all its Properties, nor any at all of its Essence.

8. I Shall discuss this Point with all the Perspicuity I am able. And, first, I affirm, That *nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we have not an adequate Idea of it, or a distinct View of all its Properties at once; for then every thing would be a Mystery.* The Knowldg of finite Creatures is gradually progressive, as Objects are presented to the Understanding. *Adam did*

did not know so much in the twentieth Ch. 2. as in the hundredth Year of his Age;  and *Jesus Christ* is expressly recorded to have *encreas'd in Wisdom as well as in Luk. 2.52.*

Stature. We are said to know a thousand things, nor can we doubt of it; yet we never have a full Conception of whatever belongs to them. I understand nothing better than this *Table* upon which I am now writing: I conceive it divisible into Parts beyond all Imagination; but shall I say it is *above my Reason* because I cannot count these Parts, nor distinctly perceive their Quantity and Figures? I am convinc'd that *Plants* have a regular Contexture, and a Multitude of Vessels, many of them equivalent or analogous to those of *Animals*, whereby they receive a Juice from the Earth, and prepare it, changing some into their own Substance, and evacuating the excrementitious Parts. But I do not clearly comprehend how all these Operations are perform'd, tho' I know very well what is meant by a *Tree*.

9. The Reason is, because *knowing nothing of Bodies but their Properties, God has wisely provided we should understand*

Sect. 3. stand no more of these than are useful
and necessary for us; which is all our
present Condition needs. Thus our
Eyes are not given us to see all Quan-
tities, nor perhaps any thing as it is in
it self, but as it bears some Relation to
us. What is too minute, as it escapes
our Sight, so it can neither harm nor
benefit us: and we have a better View
of Bodies the nearer we approach them,
because then they become more con-
venient or inconvenient; but as we re-
move farther off, we lose their Sight
with their Influence. I'm perswaded
there's no Motion which does not ex-
cite some Sound in Ears dispos'd to be
affected with proportionable Degrees
of Force from the Air; and, it may
be, the small Animals concern'd can
hear the Steps of the *Spider*, as we do
those of Men and Cattel. From these
and Millions of other Instances it is
manifest, that we have little Certainty
of any thing but as it is noxious or
beneficial to us.

10. Rightly speaking then, we are
accounted to *comprehend* any thing
when its chief Properties and their
several Uses are known to us: for

* to comprehend in all correct Authors Ch. 2. is nothing else but to know ; and as of what is not knowable we can have no Idea, so it is nothing to us. It is improper therefore to say a thing is above our Reason, because we know no more of it than concerns us, and ridiculous to supersede our Disquisitions about it upon that score. What should we think of a Man that would stiffly maintain Water to be above his Reason, and that he would never enquire into its Nature, nor employ it in his House or Grounds, because he knows not how many Particles go to a Drop ; whether the Air passes through it, is incorporated with it, or neither ? This is for all the World as if I would not go because I cannot fly. Now seeing the *Denominations of things are borrow'd from their known Properties*, and that *no Properties are knowable but what concern us, or serve to discover such as do*, we cannot be accountable for comprehending no other, nor justly requir'd more

* Εγώ δί' οὐτ' ἀλλο πί χαταλεπτὸν ἕγκυμαι σημαίγεν
πολέμοι τὸ γνωστὸν, οὐτ' ἀλλο πί χαταλαμβάνεδαι τὸ
βεβαιῶς γνωσκειν. Γελλην" ποτὶ αεισ. διδασκει.

Sect. 3. more by reasonable Men, much less
by the all-wise *DEITY.*

O 11. The most compendious Method therefore to acquire sure and useful Knowldg, is *not to trouble our selves nor others with what is useless, were it known; or what is impossible to be known at all.* Since I easily perceive the good or bad Effects of Rain upon the Earth, what should I be the better did I comprehend its Generation in the Clouds? for after all I could make no Rain at my Pleasure, nor prevent its falling at any time. A probable *Hypothesis* will not give Satisfaction in such Cases: The Hands, for Example, of two Clock-Dials may have the same external Motion, tho the Disposition of the latent Springs which produce it should be very different. And to affirm this or that to be the Way, will not do, unless you can demonstrate that no other possible Way remains. Nay, should you hit upon the real Manner, you can never be sure of it, because the Evidence of Matters of Fact solely depends upon Testimony: And it follows not that *such a thing is so, because it may be so.*

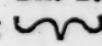
*2. The

12. The Application of this Dis- Ch. 2.
course to my Subject admits of no Dif- 
ficulty; and it is, first, That *no Christian Doctrine, no more than any ordinary Piece of Nature, can be reputed a Mystery, because we have not an adequate or compleat Idea of whatever belongs to it.* Secondly, That *what is reveal'd in Religion, as it is most useful and necessary, so it must and may be as easily comprehended, and found as consistent with our common Notions, as what we know of Wood or Stone, of Air, of Water, or the like.* And, Thirdly, That *when we do as familiarly explain such Doctrines, as what is known of natural things, (which I pretend we can) we may then be as properly said to comprehend the one as the other.*

13. They trifle then exceedingly, and discover a mighty Scarcity of better Arguments, who defend their *Mysteries* by this pitiful Shift of drawing Inferences from what is unknown to what is known, or of infesting upon adequate Ideas; except they will agree, as some do, to call every Spire of Grafs, Sitting and Standing, Fish or Flesh, profound *Mysteries.* And if out of a pertinacious or worse

Sect. 3. worse Humour they will be still fooling, and call these things *Mysteries*, I'm willing to admit as many as they please in *Religion*, if they will allow me likewise to make mine as intelligible to others as these are to me.

14. But to finish this Point, I conclude, that neither GOD himself, nor any of his Attributes, are *Mysteries* to us for want of an adequate Idea: No, not *Eternity*. The *mysterious Wits* do never more expose themselves than when they treat of *Eternity* in particular. Then they think themselves in their impregnable Fortress, and strangely insult over those dull Creatures that cannot find a thing where it is not. For if any Bounds (as Beginning or End) could be assign'd to *Eternity*, it ceases immediately to be what it should; and you frame only a finite, or rather a *negative Idea*, which is the Nature of all Limitation. Nor can it be said, that therefore *Eternity* is above *Reason* in this Respect, or that it is any Defect in us not to exhaust its Idea; for what greater Perfection can be ascrib'd to *Reason* than to know precisely the Nature of things? And does

does not all its Errors lie in attribut- Ch. 2.
ing those Properties to a thing which it
has not, or taking any away that it
contains? *Eternity* therefore is no more
above Reason *because it cannot be ima- *gin'd, than a Circle, *because it may* ;
for in both Cases *Reason* performs its
Part according to the different Natures
of the Objects, whereof the 'one is
essentially imaginable, the other not.

15. Now it appears that the pretended *Mysteriousness* of *Eternity* do's not consist in the want of an adequate Notion, which is all that we consider in it at present. The Difficulties rais'd from its Duration, as, that *Succession* seems to make it finite, and that *all things must exist together if it be instantaneous*, I despair not of solving very easily ; and rendring *Infinity* also (which is inseparable from it, or rather a different Consideration of the same thing) as little *mysterious* as that *three and two make five*. But this falls naturally into my *second Discourse*, where I give a particular Explication of the *Christian* Tenets, according to the general Principles I am establishing in this.

O Sect. 3. 16. As we know not all the Properties of things, so we can never conceive the *Essence* of any Substance in the World. To avoid Ambiguity, I distinguish, after an excellent modern Philosopher, the *Nominal* from the *Real Essence* of a thing. *The nominal Essence is a Collection of those Properties or Modes which we principally observe in any thing, and to which we give one common Denomination or Name.* Thus *the nominal Essence of the Sun* is a bright, hot, and round Body, at a certain Distance from us, and that has a constant regular Motion. Whoever hears the Word *Sun* pronounc'd, this is the Idea he has of it. He may conceive more of its Properties, or not all these; but it is still a Collection of Modes or Properties that makes his Idea. So *the Nominal Essence of Honey* consists in its Colour, Taste, and other known Attributes.

17. But *the real Essence is that intrinck Constitution of a thing which is the Ground or Support of all its Properties, and from which they naturally flow or result.* Now tho' we are perhawed that the Modes of things must have

have such a Subject to exist in, (for Ch. 2. they cannot subsist alone) yet we are u
absolutely ignorant of what it is. We conceive nothing more distinctly than the mention'd Properties of the Sun, and those whereby Plants, Fruits, Metals, &c. are known to us; but we have no manner of Notion of the several Foundations of these Properties, tho we are very sure in the mean time, that some such thing must necessarily be. The observable Qualities therefore of things is all that we understand by their Names, for which Reason they are call'd their *Nominal Essence*.

18. It follows now very plainly, that nothing can be said to be a *Mystery*, because we are ignorant of its real *Essence*, since it is not more knowable in one thing than in another, and is never conceiv'd or included in the Ideas we have of things, or the *Names* we give 'em. I had not much insisted upon this Point, were it not for the so often repeated Sophistry of some that rather merit the Encomiums of great **READERS** than great **REASONERS**. When they would have the most palpable

G 2 Absur-

Sect. 3. Absurdities and Contradictions go down with others, or make them place Religion in Words that signify nothing, or what they are not able to explain, then they wisely tell them, that they are ignorant of many things, especially the *Essence* of their own Souls; and that therefore they must not always deny what they cannot conceive. But this is not all; for when they would (instead of confuting them) make those pass for ridiculous or arrogant Pretenders, who maintain that *only intelligible and possible things are the Subject of Belief*, they industriously represent them as presuming to define the *Essence* of God with that of created Spirits. And after they have sufficiently aggravated this Presumption of their own coining, they conclude, that if the Contexture of the smalleſt Pebble is not to be accounted for, then they should not insist upon such rigorous Terms of Believing, but sometimes be content to submit their Reason to their Teachers, and the Determinations of the Church.

19. Who perceives not the Weakness and Slight of this Reasoning? We

We certainly know as much of the *Ch. 2.*
SOUL as we do of any thing else, *etc.*
if not more. We form the clearest
Conceptions of Thinking, Knowing,
Imagining, Willing, Hoping, Lov-
ing, and the like Operations of the
Mind. But we are Strangers to the
Subject wherein these Operations exist.
So are we to that upon which the
Roundness, Softness, Colour, and
Taste of a Grape depend. There is
nothing more evident than the Modes
or Properties of *BODY*, as to be ex-
tended, solid, divisible, smooth, rough,
soft, hard, &c. But we know as lit-
tle of the internal Constitution, which
is the Support of these sensible Quali-
ties, as we do of that wherein the
Operations of the *SOUL* reside.
And, as the great Man I just now
mention'd observes, *we may as well deny*
the Existence of Body, because we have
not an Idea of its real Essence, as call
the Being of the Soul in question for the
same Reason. The Idea of the *Soul*
then is every whit as clear and distinct
as that of the *Body*; and had there
been (as there is not) any Difference,
the *Soul* must have carri'd the Advan-

Sect. 3. tage, because its Properties are more
immediately known to us, and are the
Light whereby we discover all things
besides.

20. As for *GOD*, we comprehend
nothing better than his Attributes.
We know not, it's true, the Nature
of that eternal *Subject* or *Essence* where-
in Infinite Goodness, Love, Know-
ledg, Power and Wisdom co-exist ;
but we are not better acquainted with
the *real Essence* of any of his Creatures.
As by the Idea and Name of *GOD*
we understand his known Attributes
and Properties, so we understand those
of all things else by theirs ; and we
conceive the one as clearly as we do the
other. I remark'd in the Beginning
of this Chapter, that we knew no-
thing of things, but such of their Pro-
perties as were *necessary* and *useful*.
We may say the same of *God* ; for
every Act of our Religion is directed
by the Consideration of some of his
Attributes, without ever thinking of
his *Essence*. Our Love to him is kind-
led by his Goodness, and our Thank-
fulness by his Mercy ; our Obedience
is regulated by his Justice ; and our
Hopes

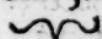
Hopes are confirm'd by his Wisdom Ch. 2.
and Power.

21. I think I may now warrantably conclude, that nothing is a *Mystery*, because we know not its *Essence*, since it appears that it is neither knowable in it self, nor ever thought of by us: So that the *Divine Being* himself cannot with more Reason be accounted *mysterious* in this Respect than the most contemptible of his *Creatures*. Nor am I very much concern'd that these *Essences* escape my *Knowledg*: for I am fix'd in the Opinion, that *what Infinite Goodness has not been pleas'd to reveal to us, we are either sufficiently capable to discover our selves, or need not understand it at all*. I hope now it is very manifest that *Mysteries in Religion* are but ill argu'd from the pretended *Mysteries of Nature*; and that such as endeavour to support the former by the latter, have either a Design to impose upon others, or that they have never themselves duly consider'd of this Matter,

C H A P. III.

*The Signification of the Word MY-
STERY in the New Testament,
and the Writings of the most an-
tient Christians.*

22. Having so dispatch'd these adequate Ideas, and, I know not what, *real Essences*, we come now to the main Point upon which the whole Controversy chiefly depends. For the Question being, *whether or no Christianity is mysterious*, it ought to be naturally decided by the *New Testament*, wherein the *Christian Faith* is originally contain'd. I heartily desire to put the Case upon this Issue, I appeal to this Tribunal: For did I not infinitely prefer the Truth I learn from these sacred Records to all other Considerations, I should never assert that *there are no Mysteries in Christianity*. The *Scriptures* have engag'd me in this Error, if it be one; and I will sooner be reputed Heterodox with these only on

on my side, than to pass for Orthodox Ch. 3. with the whole World, and have them  against me.

23. Now by searching the *Scriptures* I find some of the Evangelick Doctrines call'd *Mysteries*, in a more general, or in a more particular Sense. They are more generally so call'd with respect to all Mankind: for being certain Matters of Fact only known to God, and lodg'd in his Decree, or such Events as were quite lost and forgot in the World, it was impossible for any Person, tho never so wise or learned, to discover them; for *the things of God knoweth none but the Spirit of God*, as none can find out the secret Thoughts of Man till he tells them himself. Such Revelations then of God in the *New Testament* are call'd *Mysteries*, not from any present Inconceivableness or Obscurity, but with respect to what they were before this *Revelation*, as that is call'd our Task which we long since perform'd.

24. If any should question this, let him hear the Apostle *Paul* declare for himself and his Fellow-Labourers in the *Gospel*: *We speak*, says he, *the Wisdom*

Cor. 2.

Sect. 3. *Wisdom of God hid in a MYSTERY,*
~~~ *which God ordain'd before the World for*  
<sup>1 Cor. 2.</sup> *our Glory, which none of the Princes of*  
<sup>7, 8.</sup> *the World knew, &c.* And, to shew  
that this Divine Wisdom was a *Myst*er-y for want of revealing Infor-  
ma-  
tion, he presently subjoins, *Eye hath  
not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have  
entered into the Heart of Man the things  
which God hath prepar'd for them that  
love him; but God hath reveal'd them to  
us by his Spirit.* The most perspicaci-  
ous *Philosophers* were not able to fore-  
tel the Coming of *Christ*, to discover  
the *Resurrection* of the Body, nor any  
other Matter of Fact that is deliver'd  
in the *Gospel*: And if they happen'd  
now and then to say something like  
the Truth, they did but divine at best,  
and could never be certain of their  
Opinion. It is a most delightful  
thing to consider what Pains the en-  
quiring *Heathens* were often at to give  
a Reason for what depended not in the  
least upon any Principles in their *Phi-  
losophy*, but was an historical Fact com-  
municable by God alone, or such as  
had undoubted Memoirs concerning it.  
Of this I think it not amiss to add the  
following Example.

25. The same Experience that Ch. 3. taught the *Gentiles* their mortal Condition, acquainted them also with the Frailty of their Natures, and the numberless Calamities constantly attending them. They could not perswade themselves that the Species of Man came in such deplorable Circumstances out of the Hands of an infinitely good and merciful Deity ; and so were inclin'd to impute all to the Wickedness of adult Persons, till they perceiv'd that Death and Misfortune did not spare innocent Children more than Robbers and Pirates. At last they imagin'd a *pre-existent State*, wherein the Soul acting separately like Angels, might have contracted some extraordinary Guilt, and so for Punishment be thrust into the Body, which they sometimes compar'd to a Prison, but oftner to a \* Grave. This was likewise the Origin of *Transmigration*, tho in process of Time the Sins of this World became as much concern'd in that Opinion as those of the other. But nothing is more ingenious than the

Ac-

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\* As if Σωτεια had been a Corruption of Σωτηα.

Sect. 3. Account which *Cebes the Theban* gives us of the Matter in his most excellent *Portraiture of humane Life*. He feigns

\* *Imposture* sitting in a Throne at the Gate of Life, in the Shape of a most beautiful Lady, holding a Cup in her Hand: She obligingly presents it to all that are on their Journey to this World, and these as civilly accept it; but the Draught proves *Ignorance* and *Error*, whence proceed all the Disorders and Misery of their Lives,

26. This Point was a great *Mystery* to these honest Philosophers, who had only Fancy to guide them, and could not pretend to Instructions from the *Mind of God*; but the thing is now no

<sup>1 Cor. 2.</sup> *Mystery to us that have the Mind of Christ.* We know that *Adam* the first

Man became also the first Sinner, and Mortal; and that so the whole Race propagated from him could be naturally no better than he was: *By one*

<sup>Rom. 5.12.</sup> *Man Sin enter'd into the World, and Death by Sin.*

27. But

\* Ορέστης, ἐπί τε, τοῦδε πίνει πύλων θεόντων πνεῦ καί μενον—εφ' ἐπιθετικούς γυναικεῖς πεπλασιαδέρη τῷ ιθεῖ, καὶ πυλῶν φανερούς, &c. Cebet. Tab. p. 11. Ed. Amst. 1689.

27. But some Doctrines of the Go- Ch. 3.  
 spel are more particularly call'd *Myste-* *ries*, because they were hid from God's  
 peculiar People under the *Mosaick* Oe-  
 conomy ; not that they knew nothing  
 concerning them, for the *Law* had a <sup>Heb. 10.1.</sup>  
*Shadow of good things to come* ; but they  
 were not clearly and fully reveal'd till  
 the *New Testament* Times, being vail'd  
 before by various Typical Representa-  
 tions, Ceremonies, and figurative Ex-  
 pressions. *Christ* tells his Disciples,  
*Many Prophets and Kings have desir'd* <sup>Luke 10.</sup>  
*to see those things which you see, and* <sup>24.</sup>  
*have not seen them, and to hear those*  
*things which you hear, and have not*  
*heard them.* *Paul* says, *we use great* <sup>2 Cor. 3.</sup>  
*PLAINNESS* of *Speech*, *and* <sup>12, 13.</sup>  
*not as Moses who put a VAIL over*  
*his Face :* And then expressly adds,  
*that this VAIL is taken away* <sup>in Ver. 14.</sup>  
*Christ*, which could not be truly af-  
 firm'd, were the things reveal'd still  
 inconceivable ; for *I know no Difference*  
*between not hearing of a thing at all, and*  
*not comprehending it when you do.* In  
 another Place *Paul* has these remarka-  
 ble Words ; *The Preaching of Jesus* <sup>Rom. 16.</sup>  
*Christ according to the REVELATION* <sup>25, 26.</sup>  
*of*

Sect. 3. of the MYSTERIES which was kept secret  
since the World began ; but now is made  
MANIFEST, and by the Scriptures of  
the Prophets, according to the Command-  
ment of the everlasting God, MADE  
KNOWN to all Nations for the Obe-  
dience of Faith.

28. These Passages alone sufficient-  
ly prove the Assertions contain'd in  
N° 6 and 7 of this Section, *viz.* First,  
that the *Mysteries of the Gospel* were cer-  
tain things in their own Nature intelli-  
gible enough, but call'd *Mysteries* by  
reason of the *Vail* under which they were  
formerly hid. Secondly, that under the  
*Gospel* this *Vail* is wholly remov'd. From  
which, Thirdly, follows the promis'd  
Conclusion, that such *Doctrines* cannot  
now properly deserve the Name of *Mys-  
teries*.

29. It is observable, that the hot-  
test Sticklers for the *Fathers* do cite  
their Authority only where they think  
it makes for them, and slight or sup-  
press it when not favourable to their  
Cause. Lest it should be maliciously  
insinuated, that I serve the *holy Scrip-  
tures* after the same manner, I shall  
here transcribe all the Passages of the  
New

New Testament where the word *Mystery* Ch. 3. occurs, that a Man running may read with Conviction what I defend. The whole may be commodiiously reduc'd to these Heads. First, *Mystery* is read for the *Gospel* or the *Christian Religion* in general, as it was a future Dispensation totally hid from the *Gentiles*, and but very imperfectly known to the *Jews*: Secondly, Some particular Doctrines occasionally reveal'd by the *Apostles* are said to be *manifested Mysteries*, that is, unfolded Secrets. And, Thirdly, *Mystery* is put for any thing vail'd under Parables or Enigmatical Forms of Speech. Of all these in Order.

30. *Mystery* is read for the *Gospel* or Christianity in general in the following Passages: *Rom.* 16. 25, 26. *The Preaching of Jesus Christ according to the Revelation of the MYSTERI* which was kept secret since the *World began*; but now is made manifest, and by the *Writings of the Prophets*, according to the *Commandment of the everlasting God*, made known to all *Nations* for the *Obedience of Faith*. Now, in what Sense could this *Mystery* be said to

Sect. 3. to be reveal'd, this Secret to be made manifest, to be made known to all Nations by the Preaching of the *Apostles*, if it remain'd still incomprehensible? A mighty Favour indeed! to bless the World with a parcel of unintelligible Notions or Expressions, when it was already overstock'd with the *Acroatick* Discourses of *Aristotle*, with the *Eso-terick* Doctrines of *Pythagoras*, and the *Mysterious* Jargon of the other Sects of Philosophers; for they all made high Pretences to some rare and wonderful Secrets not communicable to every one of the Learned, and never to any of the Vulgar. By this means the obsequious Disciples apologiz'd for all that was found contradictory, incoherent, dubious, or incomprehensible in the Works of their several Masters. To any that complain'd of Inconsistency or Obscurity, they presently answer'd, O, Sir, the *Philosopher* said it, and you ought therefore to believe it: He knew his own Meaning well enough, tho he car'd not, it may be, that all others should do it too: So the Occasions of your Scruples, Sir, are only seeming, and not real. But the *Christian*

stian Religion has no need of such miserable Shifts and Artifices, there being nothing in it above or contrary to the strictest Reason: And such as are of another Mind may as well justify the idle Dreams of the Philosophers, the Impieties and Fables of the Alcoran, or any thing as well as Christianity. The second Passage is in 1 Cor. 2. 7. the Words were but just now read, and need not here be repeated. The third Passage is in 1 Cor. 4. 1. *Let a Man so account of us as the Ministers of Christ, and the Stewards or Dispensers of the MYSTERIES of God*; that is, the Preachers of those Doctrines which God was pleas'd to reveal. The fourth Passage is in Ephes. 6. 9. *Praying—for me, that Utterance may be given unto me that I may open my Mouth boldly, to make known the MYSTERY of the Gospel.* Parallel to this is the fifth Passage in Col. 4. 3, 4. *Praying also for us, that God would open unto us a Door of Utterance to speak the MYSTERY of Christ—that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.* The Clearness of these Words admits of no Comment. The sixth Passage is in Col. 2. 2. *That*

Sect. 3. their Hearts might be comforted being  
knit together in Love, and unto all the  
Riches of the full Assurance of Under-  
standing, to the Knowldg of the MY-  
STERY of God, and of the Father, and  
of Christ. Here is evidently meant the  
Revelation of the Gospel-State: for  
whatever right Conceptions the Jews  
might have of the Father, they had  
not that full Knowldg of Christ and  
his Doctrines, which are the inestima-  
ble Privileges we now enjoy. The  
seventh Passage is in 1 Tim. 3. 8, 9.  
*Likewise must the Deacons be grave, not  
double-tongu'd, not given to much Wine,  
nor greedy of filthy Lucre, holding the  
MYSTERY of the Faith in a pure Con-  
science; that is, living to what they  
believe.* The eighth and last Passage  
relating to this Head is in 1 Tim. 3. 16.  
*And without Controversy great is the  
MYSTERY of Godliness: God was man-  
ifest in the Flesh, justify'd in the Spirit,  
seen of Angels, preach'd unto the Gen-  
tiles, believ'd on in the World, receiv'd  
up into Glory.* I will not now insist  
upon the various Readings of these  
Words, nor critically determine which  
is spurious or genuine. All Parties  
( how

(how much soever they differ about Ch. 3. their Sense) agree that the Gradations of the Verse are Gospel-Revelations; so that the *Mystery of Godliness* cannot be restrain'd to any one, but is common to them all: It refers not to the Nature of any of them in particular, but to the Revelation of 'em all in general. And it must be granted, without any Dispute, that the gracious Manifestation of *Christ* and his *Gospel* is not only to us wonderfully stupendous and surprizing, but that it was likewise a very great *Mystery* to all preceding the *New Testament Dispensation*. From these Passages it appears, that the *Gospel* and the following Expressions are synonymous, *viz.* The *Mystery of the Faith*, the *Mystery of God and Christ*, the *Mystery of Godliness*, and the *Mystery of the Gospel*. No Doctrine then of the *Gospel* is still a *Mystery* (for the *Apostles conceal'd nothing from us that was useful, and have acquainted us with the whole Counsel of God:*) but 'tis the *Gospel* it self that was heretofore indeed a *Mystery*, and cannot now after it is fully reveal'd, properly deserve that Appellation.

Sect. 3. 31. We design in the second place  
to shew, that *certain Matters occa-*  
*nally reveal'd by the Apostles, were only*  
*Mysterious before that Revelation.* The  
Jews, who scarce allow'd other Nati-  
ons to be Men, thought of nothing less  
than that the time should ever come  
wherein those Nations might be *re-*  
*Rom. 11.15. concil'd to God, and be made Coheirs*  
*and Partakers with them of the same*  
*Privileges.* This was nevertheless re-  
solv'd upon in the Divine Decree, and  
to the Jews was a *Mystery*, but ceases so  
to continue after the Revelation of it  
to *Paul*, who, in his Epistles, has o-  
penly declar'd it to all the World.  
The first Passage we shall alledg to that  
purpose is in *Eph. 3.1—6,9.* *If you have*  
*heard of the Dispensation of the Grace*  
*of God which is given me to you-ward,*  
*how that by Revelation he made known*  
*unto me the MYSTERE (as I wrote*  
*before in few Words, whereby, when you*  
*read, you may understand my Knowledg*  
*in the MYSTERE of Christ) which in*  
*other Ages was not made known unto the*  
*Sons of Men, as it is now reveal'd unto*  
*us, his holy Apostles and Prophets, by the*  
*Spirit; that the Gentiles should be Fellow-*  
*heirs,*

heirs, and of the same Body, and Partakers Ch. 3.  
of his Promise in Christ by the Gospel—  
and to make all Men see what is the Fellow-  
ship of the MYSTERY, which from the  
Beginning of the World hath been hid in  
God. The second Passage is in Rom. 11.

25. For I would not, Brethren, that you  
should be ignorant of this MYSTERY,  
that Blindness in part is happen'd to Israel  
until the Fulness of the Gentiles be  
come in. The third Passage is in Col. 1.

25, 26, 27.—The Church, whereof I  
am made a Minister according to the  
Dispensation of God which is given to me  
for you, to fulfil the Word of God, even  
the MYSTERY which hath been hid  
from Ages and Generations, but now is  
made manifest to his Saints: to whom  
God would make known what are the  
Riches of the Glory of this MYSTERY  
among the Gentiles. The fourth Pas-  
sage is in Eph. 1. 9, 10. Having made  
known unto us the MYSTERY of his  
Will, according to his good Pleasure which  
he hath purpos'd in himself, that in the  
Dispensation of the Fulness of times, he  
might gather together into one all things  
in Christ. These Places require no  
Explication, for the Sense of them all

H 3 is,

Sect. 3. is, that the Secret of the Vocation of the  
Gentiles is in the Gospel made known, manifested and declar'd; and therefore remains no longer a Mystery. The next thing under the Designation of a Mystery in the above-mention'd Sense is one Circumstance of the Resurrection. The Apostle having no less clearly and solidly than largely reason'd upon this Subject, (1 Cor. 15.) obviates an Objection or Scruple that might be rais'd about the State of such as should be found alive on the Earth at the last day. Behold, says he, ver. 51, 52. *I shew you a MYSTERY, I impart a Secret to you; we shall not all sleep, or die, but we shall all be chang'd in a Moment, in the twinkling of an Eye; — the Dead shall rise, and we shall be chang'd.* It is not the Doctrine of the Resurrection then, you see, that is here call'd a Mystery, but only this particular Circumstance of it, viz. that the Living shall at the Sound of the last Trumpet put off their Flesh and Blood, or their Mortality, without Dying, and be in an Instant render'd incorruptible and immortal, as well as those that shall revive. In the fifth Chapter to the Eph-

Ephesians, ver. 31, 32. we learn that Ch. 3. the mutual Love and Conjunction of  *Man* and *Wife* is a Type of that indissoluble Union which is between *Christ* and his *Church*. This was questionless a great *Mystery* before we were told it, but now there is nothing more intelligible than the Foundation of that Resemblance or Figure. The Kingdom of *Antichrist* in opposition to the *Gospel* or Kingdom of *Christ* is also call'd a *Mystery*, because it was a secret Design carry'd on insensibly and by degrees: but at length, all Obstacles being remov'd or surmounted, it appears bare-fac'd to the Light, and (as it was divinely fore-told) ceases to continue a *Mystery*. *Let no Man deceive you by any means*, says *Paul* to the *Theffalonians*, (2 Thess. 2.3,4,5,6,7,8.) *for that Day shall not come except there be a falling away or Apostacy first; and that Man of Sin be reveal'd, the Son of Perdition, &c.* *And now you know what with-holdeth, that he might not be reveal'd in his time; for the MYSTERE of Iniquity doth already work, only he who now hindreth, will hinder till he be taken out of the way, and then shall that wicked*

Sect. 3. one be reveal'd. These are all the Passages relating to the second Head.

32. *Mystery* is, Thirdly, put for any thing vail'd under Parables or Enigmatical Expressions in these parallel Places following. The first is in *Mat. 13.10, 11.* *The Disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in Parables?* *He answer'd and said unto them, Because it is given to you to know the MYSTERIES of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given.* The second Passage is in *Mark 4.11.* *And Jesus said to his Disciples, Unto you is given to know the MYSTERY of the Kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in Parables.* The same Words are repeated in *Luk.8.10.* And it is most evident from all of 'em, that those things which *Christ* spoke in Parables were not in themselves incomprehensible, but *mysterious* to them only to whom they were not unfolded, *that* (as it is there said) *hearing they might not understand.* It is now the most ordinary Practice in the World for such as would not be understood by every one, to agree upon a way of speaking peculiar to themselves.

Ch. 3.  
selves. Nor is there any thing more easy than the Explication which Christ gave of these Parables at the Request of his Disciples.

33. There are but two Passages only left, and *Mystery* in them has no reference to any thing in particular, but it is put for all secret things in its utmost Latitude or Acceptation. The first Place is in *1 Cor. 13. 2.* *And tho I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all MYSTERIES, and all Knowledg; and tho I have all Faith so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing.* The second, parallel to this, is in *1 Cor. 14. 2.* *He that speaketh in an unknown Tongue, speaketh not unto Men but unto God; for no Man understandeth him, however in the Spirit he speaketh MYSTERIES;* that is, what is intelligible enough to him, are Secrets to such as understand not his Language.

34. Having so particularly alledg'd all the Passages where there is mention made of *Mysteries* in the *New Testament*, if any should wonder why I have omitted those in the *Revelation*, to such I reply, that the *Revelation* cannot

Sect. 3. cannot be properly look'd upon as a  
Part of the *Gospel*; for there are no  
new Doctrines deliver'd in it. Far  
from being a Rule of Faith or Man-  
ners, it is not as much as an Explan-  
ation of any Point in our Religion.  
The true Subject of that Book or *Vi-  
sion* is a Prophetical History of the Ex-  
ternal State of the Church in its vari-  
ous and interchangeable Periods of  
Prosperity or Adversity. But that I  
may not fall under the least Suspicion  
of dealing unfairly, I shall subjoin the  
few Texts of the *Revelation* wherein  
the word *Mystery* is contain'd. The  
first is in *Rev. 1. 20.* *The MYSTERY*  
*of the seven Stars which thou sawest in*  
*my right Hand, and the seven Golden*  
*Candlesticks:* Well, what is the *Myste-  
ry* or Secret of these Stars and Candle-  
sticks? *The seven Stars are the Angels of*  
*the seven Churches; and the seven Can-  
dlesticks, which thou sawest, are the seven*  
*Churches, namely, of Asia.* Another  
Passage is in *chap. 17. 5, 7.* *And upon*  
*her Forehead was a Name written, MY-  
STERI, BABYLON THE*  
*GREAT, &c. And the Angel said,—*  
*I will tell thee the MYSTERY of the*  
*Woman.*

*Woman.* This he performs too in the Ch. 3. following Verses, which you may consult. Nor is it undeserving our particular Notice, that *Mystery* is here made the distinguishing Mark of the false or *Antichristian Church*. *Mystery* is a Name written on her Forehead; that is, all her Religion consists in *Mystery*, she openly owns, she enjoins the Belief of *Mysteries*. And, no doubt on't, as far as any Church allows of *Mysteries*, so far it is *ANTICHRISTIAN*, and may with a great deal of Justice, tho little Honour, claim Kindred with the *scarlet Whore*. The only remaining Text is in chap. 10. 5, 6, 7. *And the Angel which I saw stand upon the Sea and upon the Earth, lifted up his Hand to Heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created Heaven and the things that therein are, and the Earth and the things that therein are, and the Sea and the things which are therein, that there should be Time no longer; but that in the Days of the Voice of the seventh Angel, when he shall begin to sound, the MYSTERY of God should be finish'd:* that is, that all the things figuratively deliver'd in this Prophecy concerning the *Gospel* (which

Sect. 3. (which was shewn above to signify the same with the *Mystery of God*) should have their final Accomplishment, and so end with this Globe and all therein contain'd.

35. I appeal now to all equitable Persons, whether it be not evident to any that can read, that *Mystery in the whole New Testament is never put for any thing inconceivable in it self, or not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Notions and Faculties, however clearly reveal'd*: And whether, on the contrary, it do's not always signify *some things naturally intelligible enough; but either so vail'd by figurative Words and Rites, or so lodg'd in God's sole Knowledg and Decree, that they could not be discover'd without special Revelation*. Whoever retains any real Veneration for the *Scripture*, and sincerely believes it to be the Word of God, must be ever concluded by its Authority, and render himself, in spight of all Prejudices, to its Evidence. He that says the *Gospel* is his only Rule of Faith, and yet believes any thing not warranted by it, he is an arrant Hypocrite, and do's but slyly banter all the World.

36. -Nor

36. Nor can a more favourable Opinion be harbour'd of thoſe, who, instead of Submission to the Dictates of Scripture and Reason, ſtraight have Recourſe to ſuch Persons as they ſpecially follow or admire, and are ready to receive or refuſe an Opinion, as theſe ſhall please to direct them. Pray, Doctor, ſays one of his Parishioners, what think you of ſuch a Book? it ſeems to make things plain. Ah! dear Sir, anſwers the Doctor, it is a very bad Book; he's a dangerous Man that wrote it; he's for believing nothing but what agrees with his own purblind, proud and carnal Reason. P. Say you ſo, Doctor? then I'm refolv'd to read no more of it, for I heard you often preach againſt Humane Reason; I'm ſorry, truly, it ſhould unhappy fall into my Hands, but I'll take care that none of our Family ſet their Eyes upon't. D. You'll do very well, Sir; besides, this Book is ſtill worse than I told you, for it deſtroyſ a great many Points which we teach; and ſhould this Doctrine take, (which God forbid) moſt of the good Books you have at home, and which coſt you no leſs Pains

to

Sect. 3. to read than Money to purchase, would signify not a Straw, and serve only for Wafte-Paper to put under Pies, or for other mean Uses. P. Bless me, good Doctor, I pray God forgive me reading such a vile Treatise; he's an abominable Man that could write it; but what? my Books worth nothing, say you? Dr. H's Sermons, and Mr. C's Discourses Waste-Paper? I'll never believe it, let who will say the contrary; Lord, why don't you excommunicate the Author, and seize upon his Books? D. Ay, Sir, Time was,—but now it seems a Man may *believe according to his own Sense*, and not as the Church directs; there's a Toleration establish'd, you know. P. That Toleration, Doctor, will—. D. Whist, Sir, say no more of it; I am as much concern'd as you can be; but it is not safe nor expedient at this time of day to find Faults.

37. There are others far from this Simplicity, but as firmly resolv'd to stand fast by their old Systems. When they tell us of *Mysteries* we must believe them, and there's no Remedy for it. It is not the Force of Reasoning that

that makes these for *Mysteries*, but Ch. 3. some by-Interest; and they'll be sure to applaud and defend any Author that writes in favour of their Cause, whether he supports it with *Reason* or not. But I'm not half so angry with these Men as with a sort of People that will not be at the Pains of examining any thing, lest they should become more clear-sighted or better inform'd, and so be tempted to take up a new Road. Such Persons must needs be very indifferent indeed, or they make Religion come into their Scutcheons.

38. The mention of Scutcheons naturally puts me in mind of those who are little mov'd with any Reasons, when *the Judgment of the Primitive Church* comes in competition. The *Fathers* (as they love to speak) are to them the best Interpreters of the Words of *Scripture*; " And what " those honest Men, says a very in- " genious \* Person, could not make " good themselves by sufficient Re- " sons, is now prov'd by their sole " Authority. If the Fathers foresaw " this,

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\* M. de Fontenelle, dans son *Histoire des Oracles*.

Sect. 3. " this, adds the same Author, they  
 ~~~ " were not to be blam'd for sparing  
 " themselves the Labour of reasoning
 " more exactly than we find they
 " commonly did. That Truth and
 Falshood should be determin'd by a
 Majority of Voices, or certain Periods
 of Time, seems to me to be the most ri-
 diculous of all Follies.

39. But if *Antiquity* can in good
 earnest add any worth to an Opinion,
 I think I need not fear to stand to its
 Decision: " For if we consider the
 " Duration of the World, (says ano-
 " ther celebrated * Writer) as we do
 " that of Man's Life, consisting of
 " Infancy, Youth, Manhood, and old
 " Age; then certainly such as liv'd
 " before us were the Children or the
 " Youth, and we are the true Antients
 " of the World. And if Experience
 " (continues he) be the most consi-
 " derable Advantage which grown
 " Persons have over the younger sort,
 " then, questionless, the Experience
 " of such as come last into the World
 " must

* Monsieur Perrault dans ses *Paralleles des Anciens & des Modernes.*

" must be incomparably greater than Ch. 3.
" of those that were born long before
" them : for the last Comers enjoy not
" only all the Stock of their Predeces-
" tors, but to it have likewise added
" their own Observations. These
Thoughts are no less ingenious than
they are just and solid. But if *Antiquity*
be understood in the vulgar
Sense, I have no Reason to despair
however ; for my Assertion too will
become antient to Posterity, and so be
in a Condition to support it self by
this commodious Privilege of Prescrip-
tion.

40. Yet seeing I am not likely to
live till that time, it cannot be amiss
to make it appear that these same *Fa-*
thers, who have the good luck to be
at once both the Young and the Old of
the World, are on my side. 'Tis not
out of any Deference to their Judg-
ments, I confess, that I take these
Pains. I have freely declar'd what
Value I set upon their Authority in the
Beginning of this Book: but my De-
sign is to shew the Disingenuity of
those, who pretending the highest Ve-
neration for the Writings of the *Fa-*

I *thers.*

Sect. 3. *tho^{rs}*, never fail to decline their Sentence when it futes not with their Humour or Interest.

41. *Clemens Alexandrinus* has every where the same Notion of *Mystery* that I have, that the *Gentiles* had, and which I have prov'd to be that of the *Gospel*. In the 5th Book of his *Stromates*, which merits the Perusal of all that are curious to understand the Nature of the *Jewish* and *Heathen Mysteri-
es*; in that Book, I say, he puts the Matter out of all Doubt, and quotes several of those Texts of Scripture, which I have already alledg'd to this purpose. Nay he tells us, that the *Christian Discipline* was call'd * *Illumination*, because it brought hidden things to light, the Master (*CHRIST*) alone removing the Cover of the *Ark*, that is, the *Mosaick Vail*. He adds in express Words, † that those things which

were

* Διὸς τὸν φωτισμὸς ἡ παθήσεια κέκλιται, ἡ τα-
κτηρυμένα φανερώσει, ἀποκαλύψαντο μόνον τὸ
διδασκόλον τὸ πόμα τὸ κιβωτόν. Pag. 578. edit. Col.
1688.

† Ἀλλὰ μὲν τὰ μυστικά τὰ ἀποκεκρυμένα ἀχει-
θῇ Ἀποστολῶν, καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν παρερθεντα μὲν απὸ τὰ
κιεῖς παρελίφασιν ἀποκεκρυμένα δὲ ἐν τῇ παλαιᾷ
εἰσαγόνη, αἱ γῦν ἐφανερώση πιστοῖς. Idem ibid.
pag. 576.

were mysterious and obscure in the Ch. 3.
Old Testament are made plain in the 
New.

42. Every one knows how the Primitive *Christians*, in a ridiculous imitation of the Jews, turn'd all the Scripture into Allegory; accommodating the Properties of those Animals mention'd in the *Old Testament* to Events that happen'd under the *New*. They took the same Liberty principally with Men, where they could discover the least Resemblance between their Names, Actions, or State of Life; and carry'd this Fancy at length to Numbers, Letters, Places, and what not. That which in the *Old Testament* therefore did, according to them, represent any thing in the *New*, they call'd the *Type* or *Mystery* of it. Thus *TYPE*, *SYMBOL*, *PARABLE*, *SHADOW*, *FIGURE*, *SIGN* and *MYSTERY*, signify all the same thing in *Justin Martyr*. This Father affirms in his Dialogue with *Tryphon* the *Jew*, that the Name of *Joshua* was a *Mystery* representing the Name *Jesus*; and that the holding up of *Mo-* Exod. 17. *ses's* 11.

Sect. 3. *ses's* Hands during the Battel with
 the *Amalekites* in *Rephidim*, was a
 Type or *Mystery* of *Christ's Cross*,
 whereby he overcame Death, as the
Israélites there did their Enemies : and
 then he adds the following Remark ;
 * *This is to be consider'd*, says he,
 concerning those two holy Men and
 Prophets of God, that neither of them
 was able in his single Person to carry
 both *MYSTERIES*, I mean the
 Type of his Cross, and that of being
 call'd by his Name. In the same Dia-
 logue he calls the Predictions of the
 Prophets † *SYMBOLS*, *PARE-
 BLES* and *MYSTERIES*, ex-
 plain'd by the succeeding Prophets.

43. When *Tertullian* in his *Apolo-
 gy* justifies the Christians from those
 inhu-

* Ήν δέ καὶ πέτρος ἐπ' αμφοτείων τῆς ἀγίων αὐτοῖς
 ἐμέτων καὶ προφητῶν τῆς θεᾶς, νοοῦσι τελευτικένον· ὅπερ
 αμφοτεῖσα τὰ μυστικά εἰς αὐτῶν βασιλεῖς εἰς τὴν μύνα-
 τος λέγω δέ τὸν τυπὸν τὰ σάμους καὶ τὸν τύπον τῆς ἀγί-
 ατος οὐπικλίσεως. Pag. 338. edit. Col. 1686.

† Εἰ μή τὸ τέττον εἰς οὐτεῖστε, ἡ φύλος, ὅπερ πλλές
 λόγικε τῆς αἰπαχειλυμέναις καὶ εἰς φύλεβολας οὐκισ-
 ειοις πέντε συμβολαις ἔργων λελεγμέναις, οἱ μετ' ἀκίνοις
 τυς εἰποντας οὐ περιζαντας γνωμένοις προφῆταις ἐπηγ-
 σαντο. Pag. 294.

inhumane Practices whereof their E- Ch. 3.
 enemies most unjustly accus'd 'em, he 
 cries, * ' We are beset, we are disco-
 ver'd every day ; — But if we
 keep always hid, how are those
 things known which we are said to
 commit ? Nay, who could make
 them known ? Such as are guilty !
 Not so, surely : for all *Mysteries*
 are of Course under an Oath of Se-
 crecy. The *Samothracian*, the *Eleu-*
sinian *Mysteries* are conceal'd ; how
 much rather such as being discover'd
 would now provoke the Justice of
 Men, and might expect to meet
 with that of God hereafter ? They
 are secret Practices, you see, and not
 incomprehensible Doctrines which this
 Father counted *Mysteries*.

44. *Origen* makes the Encampments
 of the *Israelites* in their Journey to the

I 3

Pro-

* *Quotidiè obsidemur, quotidiè prodimur ; — Si semper latemus, quando proditum est quod ad-mittimus ? Immo à quibus prodi potuit ? Ab ipsis reis ! Non utique ; cum vel ex forma omnibus Mysteriis silentii fides debeat. Samothracia & Eleusinia reticentur ; quanto magis talia quæ prodata interim etiam Humanam animadversionem provocabunt, dum Divina servatur ? Pag. 8. edit. Paris.*
 1675.

Sect. 3. Promis'd Land to be * *Symbols* or *Mysteries* describing the way to such as shall travel towards Heaven, or heavenly things. I need not add what he says of the Writings of the *Prophets*, of the Vision of *Ezekiel*, or the *Apocalypse* in particular: for he is universally confess'd to have brought this *Mystick* or *Allegorical* Method of interpreting Scripture to its Perfection, and to have furnish'd Matter to all that trod the same Path after him; an Honour, in my Opinion, not to be envy'd him. But he was so far from thinking any *Doctrine* of our Religion a *Mystery* in the present Sense of the Word, that he expressly affirms them *† to agree all with COMMON NOTIONS*, and *to commend themselves to the Assent of every well-dispos'd Hearer.*

45. The

* Εἰ δὲ οὐναταὶ διὰ συμβόλων καὶ τὴν ὁδὸν δεδηλωθεῖσσιν τὴν οὐνατούντων διὰ τὰ δεῖξα μαθήσεν ἀναγνώτῳ τὸς ἀποκαργεγμένος Ἀειδόμενος Μαρτύρων, καὶ ζητησούτῳ τὸν οὐνατεύοντα [αὐτὸν] μυσαγόροισι διὰ τὰ τὰ παρεμβόλων τὴν οὐναντίνην Ἰστορίαν ἀποκαργεγμένην. Lib. 6, contra Cels. pag. 291. edit. Cantab. 1677.

† Ορεὶς δὲ εἰ μὴ τὰ στήσεως οὐνῶν τὰς KOINAIZ ENNOIAIS ἀπεργθεῖσαι συναγερευόντα, μετατίθεσι τὰς ἀνηγραμμένοις ἀκτοταῖς τὴν λεγομένην. Lib. 3. contra Cels. pag. 135.

45. The other *Fathers* of the three Ch. 3. first Centuries have exactly the same Notions of *Mystery*: And should they in this Matter happen to contradict in one Place what they establish'd in another, (as they ordinarily do in most things) it would only serve to exclude them from being a true Rule to others that were none to themselves, But what is no small Prejudice in our Favour, seeing we have to do with Men so apt to forget, they keep very constant to this Point: so that I may justly hope by this time the Cause of *Incomprehensible and Inconceivable Mysteries in Religion* should be readily given up by all that sincerely respect *FATHERS, SCRIPTURE, or REASON.*

C H A P. IV.

Objections brought from particular Texts of **SCRIPTURE**, and from the Nature of **FAITH**, answer'd.

46. **S**OME Men are so fond of **Mysteries**, and it seems they find their Account in it, that they are ready to hazard any thing sooner than part with them. In the mean time, whether they know it or not, they lay nothing less than their Religion at stake by this Conduct; for it is an ugly Sign when People profess that what they believe is above the Examination of Reason, and will suffer it by no means to come into question: *It argues in themselves a Distrust of their Cause; and others conclude, that what dares not abide the Trial of Reason, must needs it self be unreasonable at Bottom.*

47. Notwithstanding these Consequences are so obvious, they harden them-

themselves against them, and are not Ch. 4
asham'd to bring even *Scripture* to ~~the~~^{the} countenance their Assertion. You
shall hear nothing more frequently
in their Mouths than these Words of
the Apostle, *Beware lest any Man spoil* Col. 2.8.
you by PHILOSOPHT and vain
Deceit, after the Tradition of Men,
after the Rudiments of the World, and
not after Christ. Ridiculous! as if
Reason and Truth were Vanity and
Craft! By *Philosophy* is not here under-
stood *sound Reason*, (as all Inter-
preters agree) but the Systems of *Pla-*
to, of *Aristotle*, of *Epicurus*, of the
Academicks, &c. many of whose Prin-
ciples are directly repugnant to com-
mon Sense and good Morals. *Sophi-*
stry was never more in vogue than in
the Days of *Paul*; and several out
of these Sects imbracing *Christianity*,
found the way to mix with it their old
Opinions, which they were loth to quit
for good and all. The Apostle there-
fore had weighty grounds to warn his
Converts not to confound the Inven-
tions of Men with the Doctrine of God.
It appears nevertheless that this good
Advice was to little Purpose, for you'll
find

Sect. 3. find the grossest Mistakes and Whim-sies of the *Fathers*, to have been occasion'd by the several Systems of *Philosophy* they read before their Conversion, and which they afterwards foolishly endeavour'd to reconcile with *Christianity*, to the entire Ruine almost of the latter, as we shall shew in the following Chapter.

48. But as no particular *Hypothesis*, whatsoever has a Right to set up for a Standard of Reason to all Mankind, much less may *vain Philosophy* or *Sophistry* claim this Privilege: and so far am I from aiming at any such thing, that it is the very Practice I oppose in this Book. When some have advanc'd the Metaphysical Nonsense of doting *Philosophers* into Articles of Faith, they raise a loud Clamour against *Reason*, before whose Evidence and Light their empty Shadows must disappear. For as in *Philosophy* so in *Religion* every Sect has its peculiar Extravagancies, and the *INCOMPREHENSIBLE MYSTERIES* of the latter do perfectly answer the *OCCULT QUALITIES* of the former. They were both calculated at first

first for the same Ends, *viz.* to stop the Ch. 4. Mouths of such as demand a Reason where none can be given, and to keep as many in Ignorance as Interest shall think convenient. But God forbid that I should impute the like nefarious Designs to all that contend for *Mysteries* now, Thousands whereof I know to be the best meaning Men in the Universe. This *sophistical* or *corrupt Philosophy* is elsewhere in the *New Testament* stil'd the *Wisdom of this World*, to which the *Greeks* were as much bigotted, as the *Jews* were infatuated with a Fancy that nothing could be true but what was miraculously prov'd so: *The Jews require a Sign, and the Greeks seek after Wisdom.* But this boasted *Wisdom* was then *Foolishness with God*, and so it is now with considering Men.

¹ Cor. 3.
19.

¹ Cor. 1.
22.

49. A Passage out of the Epistle to the *Romans* is cited likewise to prove Humane *Reason* not a capable Judg of what is divinely reveal'd. The Words are, *The Carnal Mind is Enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* But if these Words be spoken of *Reason*, there can be nothing more false; because *Reason* do's

Sect. 3. do's and ought to subject it self to the Divine Law; yet this Submission argues no Imperfection in *Reason*, as our Obedience to just Laws cannot be said to destroy our Liberty. *Reason* must first understand the Law of God, and then comply with it; for a Man can no more deserve Punishment for not observing such Laws as are unintelligible, than for not performing what was never enjoin'd him. The *carnal Mind* then in this Place is not *Reason*, but the carnal Desires of lewd and wicked Men; whose Practices, as they are contrary to the reveal'd Law of God, so they are to that of found *Reason* too.

50. What has been discours'd of pretended Wisdom and sensual Minds, may be easily appli'd to another Passage where it is said, that *the Weapons*

2 Cor. 10. of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong Holds, casting down Imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledg of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ. It is plain from the Words as well as the Scope of the whole,

whold, that these are the Thoughts Ch. 4.
and Imaginations of foolish and pro-
fane Men, and should be captivated or
reform'd by Reason as well as Scripture;
as; in effect, they often are: for such Persons not ordinarily allowing
of Argument from Scripture, are first
perswaded by Reason, and after that
they receive the Scripture. But can
Reason cast down or destroy it self? No,
but it reduces those vain and
impious Sophists which borrow its
Name to cover or authorize the Dis-
orders they occasion. It would be extremely tedious
to go one by one over all the Texts
which ignorant or perverse Men all
ledge against that Use of Reason in
Religion, which I particularly es-
tablish in Any single Passage to my pur-
pose should, one would think, give
sufficient Satisfaction to all Christian
Lovers of Truth: for the Word of
God must be every where uniform
and self-consistent. But I have quoted
several in the second Chapter of the
second Section, to speak nothing of
what I perform'd in the foregoing
Chapter of the present Section. Yet
because

Sect. 3.) because this Reasoning might be retorted, and to leave no plausible Pretexts to Cavillers or Deceivers, I have punctually answer'd the strongest Objections I have observ'd in the most celebrated Pieces of *Divinity*; I say which I have observ'd, for I shou'd read the *Gospel* a Million of Times over before the Vulgar Notion of *Mystery* could ever enter into my Head, or any Passage in that Book could suggest to me that the Sense of it was above Reason or Enquiry. Nor do I find my self yet inclin'd to envy those who entertain other Thoughts of it, when all the while they openly acknowledg it to be a Divine Revelation. But seeing the most material Difficulty made to me by a Friend, is, that my Opinion destroys the Nature of *FAITH*, I shall with all the Brevity I can deliver my Sentiments concerning this Subject.

52. I will spend no time upon the ordinary Divisions of *Faith* into Historical, or Temporary, or Justifying, Lively or Dead, Weak or Strong, because most of these are not so much *Faith* it self, as different Effects thereto annexed.

of.

of. The word imports *Belief* or *Per-^{Ch. 4}swasion*, as when we give Credit to any thing which is told us by God or Man; whence *Faith* is properly divided into *Human* and *Divine*. Again, *Divine Faith* is either when God speaks to us immediately himself, or when we acquiesce in the Words or Writings of those to whom we believe he has spoken. All *Faith* now in the World is of this last sort, and by consequence entirely built upon *Ratiocination*. For we must first be convinc'd that those Writings are theirs whose Names they bear, we then examine the outward State and Actions of those Persons, and lastly understand what is contain'd in their Works; otherwise we cannot determine whether they be worthy of God or not, much less firmly believe them.

53. To be confident of any thing without conceiving it, is no real *Faith* or *Perswasion*, but a rash *Prefumption*, and an obstinate *Prejudice*, rather becoming Enthusiasts or *Impostors* than the taught of God, who has no Interest to delude his Creatures, nor wants Ability to inform them rightly. I
prou'd

Sect. 3. prov'd before, (Sect. 2. Chap. 2.) that the Difference between *Human* and *Divine Revelations* did not consist in degrees of Perspicuity, but in Certitude. So many Circumstances frequently concur in History as render it equal to Intuition: Thus I can as soon deny my own Being as the Murder of *Cicero*, or the Story of *William the Conqueror*; yet this happens only sometimes: But God speaks always Truth and Certainty.

Now since by *Revelation* Men are not endu'd with any new Faculties, it follows that God should lose his end in speaking to them, if what he said did not agree with their common Notions. Could that Person justly value himself upon being wiser than his Neighbours, who having infallible Assurance that something call'd *Blictri* had a Being in Nature, in the mean time knew not what this *Blictri* was? And seeing the Case stands really thus, all *Faith* or Perswasion must necessarily consist of two Parts, *Knowledg* and *Affsent*. 'Tis the last indeed that constitutes the formal Act of *Faith*, but not without the Evidence of the first: And this

this is the true Account we have of it Ch. 4. all over the New Testament. There ~~we~~ we read that *without Faith it is impossible to please God*; but *he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* So the firm Perswasion of a pious Man that his Requests will be granted, is grounded upon his knowledg of the Being, Goodnes, and Power of God. It was reckon'd no Crime not to believe in *Christ* before he was reveal'd; for *how could they believe in him of whom they had not heard?* But with what better Reason could any be condemn'd for not believing what he said, if they might not understand it? for, as far as I can see, these Cases are parallel. *Faith* is likewise said *to come by hearing*; but without Understanding 'tis plain this Hearing would signify nothing, Words and their Ideas being reciprocal in all Languages.

Ver. 17.

55. The Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* do's not define *FAITH* a Prejudice, Opinion, or Conjecture, but Conviction or Demonstration: *Faith*, says he, *is the confident Expectation of things hop'd for, and the Demonstration* ^{Heb. 11.1.}

K of

Sect. 3. of things not seen. These last Words, ~~things~~ things not seen, signify not (as some would have it) things incomprehensible or unintelligible, but past or future Matters of Fact, as the Creation of the World, and the Resurrection of the Dead, or the Belief of some things invisible to our corporeal Eyes, tho intelligible enough to the Eyes of our Understanding. This appears by all the Examples subjoin'd to that Definition. Besides, there can be properly no *Faith* of things seen or present, for then 'tis Self-evidence, and not Ra-

Rom. 8.24, *tiocination: Hope that is seen is not*

25. *Hope, for what a Man sees why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with Patience wait for*

Heb. 11.13. *it. So the Patriarchs receiv'd not the Promises, but saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them.*

56. Without conceiving *Faith* after this manner, how could *Christ* be **Joh. 8.12.** *term'd the Light of the World, the Light & 9. 5.* **Acts 13.47.** *of the Gentiles?* How could Believers be said to have the *Spirit of Wisdom,*

Eph. 1.17. *and to have the Eyes of their Hearts enlightened?* For the Light of the Heart or Understanding is the *Knowledg of things;*

things; and as this Knowledg is more Ch. 4.
or less, so the Mind is proportionably
illuminated. *Be not unwise*, says the Eph. 5.17.
Apostle, *but understanding what the Will
of the Lord is.* And in another place
he exhorts Men never to act in dubious
Matters till they are *fully persuaded in Rom. 14.5.*
their own Minds.

57. But to all this will be objected
that remarkable Instance of *Abraham's*
Faith, who was ready to sacrifice his
only Son, notwithstanding God had
promis'd that Kings should descend of
him, and his Seed be numerous as the
Stars of Heaven, or the Sand upon
the Sea-shore. Did *Abraham* blindly
obey then, without reconciling the
apparent Contradiction between God's
present Command and his former Pro-
mises? Far from it: for 'tis expressly
recorded, that *he that had receiv'd the Heb. 11.17.
Promises offer'd up his only begotten, of 18, 19.
whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy
Seed be blessed;* * Reasoning that God was
able to raise him again from the Dead,
from whence also he had receiv'd him in a
Figure. He rightly concluded that
K a God

* *Be not unwise* should be translated.

Sect. 3. God was able to revive *Isaac* by a Miracle, as he was miraculously born, according to another Promise, after his Parents were past having Children, and so *as good as dead*: therefore it is elsewhere written of *Abraham*, that *being not weak in Faith, he consider'd not his own Body now dead, when he was about an hundred Years old, neither yet the Deadness of Sarah's Womb; nor stagger'd at God's Promise through Unbelief; but being strong in Faith he gave Glory to God, and was fully perswaded that what he had promis'd he was able also to perform.*

58. Now what is there in all this, but very strict Reasoning from Experience, from the Possibility of the thing, and from the Power, Justice, and Immutability of him that promis'd it? Nor can any Man shew me in all the *New Testament* another Signification of *Faith* but a most firm Perswasion built upon substantial Reasons. In this Sense all *Christianity* is not seldom stil'd *the Faith*; as now we usually say that we are of this or that *PERSWASION*, meaning the Profession of some Religion. But surely

nothing

nothing can better root and establish Ch. 4.
our Perswasion than a thorow Examination and Trial of what we believe ; whereas the Weakness and Instability of our *Faith* proceed from want of sufficient Reasons for it, whereupon Incredulity always follows ; then fails Obedience, which is the constant Sign and Fruit of genuine *Faith* ; and hence spring all the Irregularities of Mens Lives. *He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar*—For he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk as he walk'd. Nor can it possibly fall out otherwise, but that he who believes without Understanding must be tost and carri'd about with every Wind of *Doctrine*, by the Slight and Cunning of Men ready to deceive. *Eph.4.14*

59. Tho the Authority of the New Testament be so clear in this Matter, yet I shall further confirm it by the following Observations. First, if *Faith* were not a *Perswasion resulting from the previous Knowledg and Comprehension of the thing believ'd*, there could be no *Degrees nor Differences in it*; for these are evident Tokens that Men know more

Sect. 3. or less of a thing, as they have Desires or Opportunities to learn it. But that there are such Degrees appears by the Scripture, where those that have only an imperfect and perfunctory Knowledg of Religion are compar'd ^{2 Cor. 3.2.} to *Infants* who feed only upon Milk; but they who arrive at a more full and accurate Certainty are liken'd to ^{Heb. 5.12.} *grown Men* that can digest stronger Food. ^{13, 14.}

60. My next Observation is, That the Subject of Faith must be intelligible to all, since the Belief thereof is commanded under no less a Penalty than ^{Mark 16.} Damnation: He that believeth not, shall be damn'd. But shall any be damn'd for the Non-performance of Impossibilities? Obligations to believe do therefore suppose a Possibility to understand. I shew'd before that *Contradiction* and *Nothing* were convertible Terms; and I may now say as much of *Mystery* in the Theological Sense: for, to speak freely, *Contradiction* and *Mystery* are but two emphatick ways of saying Nothing. *Contradiction* expresses Nothing by a couple of Ideas that destroy one another, and

and *Mystery* expresses Nothing by Ch. 4:
Words that have no Ideas at all.

61. The third Observation shall be,
That if any part of *Scripture* were unintelligible, it could never be rightly translated, except the Sound of the Words, and not their Sense, be look'd upon as the Revelation of God. Terms can by no means be understood, unless the things they denote be understood also. I may well understand Things without their Names, but never Names without knowing their Subjects. And, in good earnest, to what sort of Assurance can any Man pretend, that he has made a right Version of what he openly professes not to conceive? It cannot be imagin'd how much the Notion of *Mystery* contributes to the Obscurity of *Scripture* in most Translations. When an able Linguist meets with a difficult Passage, he presently takes it for a *Mystery*, and concludes it is to no purpose to be at more Pains about what is in it self inexplicable. But an uncapable Translator lays his own blundering Nonsense, and all the *mysterious* Fruits of his Ignorance to God Almighty's Charge. These are

Sect. 3. the Wretches who plentifully furnish
 the *Atheistical* and *Profane* with all the
 Matter of their Objections against
Scripture. But I hope in Time we
 may see a Remedy to these Disor-
 ders.

62. The fourth Observation is, That
 except *Faith* signifies an intelligible Per-
 suasion, we cannot give others a Reason
^{1 Pet. 3.15.} of our *Hope*, as Peter directs us. To
 say that what we believe is the Word
 of God, will be to no end, except we
 prove it to be so by Reason; and I
 need not add, that if we may not ex-
 amine and understand our *Faith*, evey-
 ry Man will be oblig'd implicitly to
 continue of that Religion wherein he
 is first educated. Suppose a *Siamese*
 * *Talapoin* should tell a *Christian* Prea-
 cher that † *Sommonocodom* forbad the
 Goodness of his Religion to be tri'd
 by the Light of Reason; how could
 the *Christian* confute him, if he like-
 wise should maintain that certain
 Points of Christianity were above Rea-
 son? The Question would not be then,
 whe-

* Or Priest.

† The God of the Siameses.

whether *Mysteries* might be allow'd in Ch. 4.
the true Religion, but who had more
Right to institute them, *Christ* or *Som-
monocodom* ?

63. My last Observation shall be,
That either the *Apostles* could not write
more intelligibly of the reputed *Mysteries*,
or they would not. If they would not,
then 'tis no longer our Fault if we nei-
ther understand nor believe them, for
nothing cannot be the Object of Be-
lief: And if they could not write
more clearly themselves (which our
Adversaries will not suppose) they
were so much the less to expect Credit
from others.

64. But 'tis affirm'd, that *GOD has*
*a Right to require the Assent of his Crea-
tures to what they cannot comprehend*:
and questionless, he may command
whatever is just and reasonable, for to
act Tyrannically do's only become the
Devil. But I demand to what end
should God require us to believe what
we cannot understand? *To exercise*,
some say, *our Diligence*. But this at
first sight looks ridiculous, as if the
plain Duties of the *Gospel*, and our ne-
cessary Occupations, were not sufficient
to

Sect. 3. to employ all our time. But how exercise our Diligence? Is it possible for us to understand those *Mysteries* at last, or not? If it be, then all I contend for is gain'd; for I never pretended that the *Gospel* could be understood without due Pains and Application, no more than any other Book. But if it be impossible after all to understand them, this is such a piece of Folly and Impertinence as no sober Man would be guilty of, to puzzle Peoples Heads with what they could never conceive, to exhort to, and command the Study of them; and all this to keep 'em from Idleness, when they can scarce find leisure enough for what is on all hands granted to be intelligible.

65. Others say that *GOD has enjoin'd the Belief of MYSTERIES to make us more bumble*. But how? By letting us see the small Extent of our Knowledg. But this extraordinary Method is quite needless, for Experience acquaints us with that every day; and I have spent a whole Chapter in the second Section of this Book, to prove that we have not an adequate Idea of all the Properties, and no Idea of

of the real Essence of any Substance Ch. 4.
in the World. It had been a much better Answer, that God would thus abridg our Speculations, to gain us the more time for the practice of what we understand. But many *cover a Multitude of Sins* by their Noise and Heat on the behalf of such foolish, and unprofitable Speculations.

66. From all these Observations, and what went before, it evidently follows that *Faith* is so far from being an implicite Assent to any thing above Reason, that this Notion directly contradicts the Ends of Religion, the Nature of Man, and the Goodness and Wisdom of God. But at this rate, some will be apt to say, *Faith* is no longer *Faith* but *Knowledg*. I answer, that if *Knowledg* be taken for a present and immediate View of things, I have no where affirm'd any thing like it, but the contrary in many Places. But if by *Knowledg* be meant understanding what is believ'd, then I stand by it that *Faith* is *Knowledg*: I have all along maintain'd it, and the very Words are promiscuously us'd for one another in the *Gospel*. *We know*, i. e. we

Sect. 3. we believe, that this is indeed the Christ,
the Saviour of the World. I know, and
Joh. 4.42. am perswaded by the Lord Jesus, that
Rom. 14. there is nothing unclean of it self. You
14. know that your Labour is not in vain in
1 Cor. 15. the Lord.
58.

67. Others will say that this Noti-
on of *Faith* makes *Revelation* useless.
But, pray, how so? for the Question
is not, whether we could discover all
the Objects of our *Faith* by Ratiocina-
tion: I have prov'd on the contrary,
that no Matter of Fact can be known
without *Revelation*. But I assert,
that what is once reveal'd we must as
well understand as any other Matter in
the World, *Revelation* being only of
use to inform us whilst the Evidence
of its Subject perswades us. Then,
reply they, *Reason* is of more Dignity
than *Revelation*. I answer, Just as
much as a *Greek Grammar* is superiour
to the *New Testament*; for we make
use of *Grammar* to understand the Lan-
guage, and of *Reason* to comprehend
the Sense of that Book. But in a
word, I see no need of Comparisons
in this Case, for *Reason* is not less from
God than *Revelation*; 'tis the Candle,
the

the Guide, the Judg he has lodg'd Ch. 4. within every Man that cometh into this World.

68. Lastly, It may be objected, That the Poor and Illiterate cannot have such a *Faith* as I maintain. Truly if this can be made out, it may pass for a greater *Mystery* than any System of *Divinity* in *Christendom* can afford: for what can seem more strange and wonderful, than that the common People will sooner believe what is unintelligible, incomprehensible, and above their Reasons, than what is easy, plain, and suited to their Capacities? But the Vulgar are more oblig'd to *Christ*, who had a better Opinion of them than these Men; for he preach'd his *Gospel* to them in a special manner; and they, on the other hand, *heard him gladly*; Mark 12. 37. because, no doubt, they understood his Instructions better than the *mysterious* Lectures of their *Priests* and *Scribes*. The uncorrupted Doctrines of *Christianity* are not above their Reach or Comprehension, but the Gibberish of your *Divinity Schools* they understand not. It is to them *the Language of the Beast*, and is inconsistent

Sect. 3. sistent with their Condition in this
World, when their very Teachers
must serve above an Apprenticeship
to master it, before they begin the Study
of the *Bible*. How slowly must
the *Gospel* have mov'd at the Beginning,
if such as were call'd to preach it
had been oblig'd to qualify themselves
after this manner! And no wonder that it has such little Effects now
upon Mens Lives, after it is so miserably deform'd and almost ruin'd by
those unintelligible and extravagant
Terms, Notions, and Rites of *Pagan*
or *Jewish* Original.

69. Thus I have distinctly answer'd
the several Objections made to me,
and I shall add no more on this Subject
of *Faith*, when I have consider'd a
Passage in the first Epistle to *Peter*,
where it is written, that the *Angels* de-
sire to see into certain things; yet those
things are not inconceivable *Mysteries*,
but the Coming of *Christ* and the *Go-
spel-state of Salvation*, which were di-
vinely foretold to the *Jews*, and con-
cerning which they carefully reason'd
then; tho, now those things are ful-
fill'd, we are not permitted that Liber-
ty.

ty. Receiving the end of your Faith, Ch. 4. says Peter, the Salvation of your Souls; of which Salvation the Prophets have ^{1 Pet. 1.} enquir'd and diligently search'd, who prophesied ^{9-12.} of the Grace that should come unto you; searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testify'd before-hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow: Unto whom it was reveal'd, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preach'd unto you by the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, which things the Angels desire to look into. Now here's no great Mystery in all this, that the Angels, who being finite Creatures, can know nothing but by Experience, Ratiocination, or Revelation, should be as curious as the Jews, to penetrate into those future Events of such Importance, and so very obscurely reveal'd.

C H A P. V.

Objections, drawn from the Consideration of MIRACLES, answer'd.

70. **W**hen all other shifts prove ineffectual, the Partizans of *MYSTERY* fly to *MIRACLES* as their last Refuge: but this is too weak a Place to make any long Resistance, and we doubt not of beating 'em quickly thence with Ease and Safety. But seeing, for the most part, the State of this Controversy is never distinctly laid, I shall first endeavour to give a clear Notion of the Nature of *Miracles*, and then leave it to be consider'd whether I have much Reason to apprehend any Danger from this Objection. *A MIRACLE then is some Action exceeding all humane Power, and which the Laws of NATURE cannot perform by their ordinary Operations.*

71. Now

71. Now whatever is contrary to Ch. 5.
Reason can be no *Miracle*, for it has ~~been~~
been sufficiently prov'd already, that
Contradiction is only another word for
Impossible or *Nothing*. The *miracu-*
lous Action therefore must be some-
thing in it self intelligible and possible,
tho' the manner of doing it be extra-
ordinary. So for a Man to walk safe
in the midst of Fire is conceivable, and
possible too, should any thing capable
of repelling the Heat and Flames sur-
round him: but when such a Security
is not provided by Art or Chance, but
is the immediate Effect of supernatu-
ral Power, then it makes a *Miracle*.
An able *Physician* do's sometimes re-
store Sight to the Blind; and a Hand
or Foot must dry up, when the Cir-
culation of the Blood and Humours is
too much excluded from it: but if
without the ordinary Time and Ap-
plications those Members be cur'd in
an Instant, at the Command or De-
sire of any Person, such an Action is
truly *miraculous*, as well as the sudden
Restoration of a sick Body to Health,
which Art or Nature must spend a
great deal of Time and Pains upon.

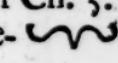
Sect. 3. 72. No *Miracle* then is contrary to Reason, for the Action must be intelligible, and the Performance of it appear most easy to the Author of *Nature*, who may command all its Principles at his Pleasure. Therefore all those *Miracles* are fictitious, wherein there occur any Contradictions, as that *Christ* was born without opening any Passage out of the *Virgin's* Body; that a Head spoke some Days after it was sever'd from the Body, and the Tongue cut out; with Multitudes of this kind that may be met with among the *Papists*, the *Jews*, the *Bramins*, the *Mahometans*, and in all Places where the Credulity of the People makes 'em a Merchandise to their Priests.

73. Let us next consider, that God is not so prodigal of *Miracles*, as to work any at random. The Order of Nature is not alter'd, stopp'd, or forwarded, unless for some weighty Design becoming the Divine Wisdom and Majesty. And, indeed, we learn from *Scripture* and *Reason*, that no *Miracle* is ever wrought without some special and important End, which is either appointed by those for whom the *Miracle*

cle is made, or intended and declar'd Ch. 5.
by him that works it. If the *Apostles* ~~ever~~
had barely cur'd the blind, the deaf,
the lame, the diseas'd, this would cer-
tainly procure 'em an extraordinary
Esteem; and in some Places too Divine
VVorship, as it happen'd to *Paul* and
Barnabas at *Lystra*, when they had ^{Acts 14.}
cur'd a born Cripple without any far-
ther Circumstance; but this was only
a Means to gain the Attention of these
Idolaters to the Doctrine they were
about to preach in their City. Nor is
there any *Miracle* mention'd in the
New Testament, but what serv'd to
confirm the Authority of those that
wrought it, to procure Attention to
the Doctrines of the *Gospel*, or for the
like wise and reasonable Purposes.

74. By this Rule the celebrated
Feats of *Goblins* and *Fairies*, of *Witches*,
of *Conjurers*, and all the *Heathen Pro-
digies*, must be accounted fictitious,
idle, and superstitious Fables; for in
all these there appears no End deser-
ving a Change in *Nature*. Besides, they
evidently contradict our Idea of God,
and quite subvert his Providence. Di-
abolical Delusions would hereby re-

Sect. 3. receive equal Confirmation with Divine  Revelation, *Miracles* being perform'd in favour of both. Nay, the VVonders of the *Devil* and his Agents would infinitely exceed in Number and Quality those of God, and his Servants : which Assertion must hold true, were no Stories believ'd but the best attested in every County of *England*, to speak nothing of more credulous Nations ; for it is very observable, that the more ignorant and barbarous any People remain, you shall find 'em most abound with Tales of this nature, and stand in far greater Aw of *Sutan* than *Je-ho-vah*. In a word, the *Heathens*, after this rate, would be rivetted in their *Idolatry*, and the ugliest Hag or most beggarly Astrologer equalize the Prophets and Apostles. But why should good Reasons be spent in Confutation of mere Fictions ? for I challenge any Person whatsoever to produce one Instance of these lying VVonders that contains all the true Characters of Historical Evidence ; and withal I dare engage as soon to prove the Goodness of the *Al-coran* as of the *Gospel*, if the Belief of any *Miracles*, except Divine ones, be granted me. But they must draw some Advan-

Advantage from the superstitious Fear Ch. 5.
of the People, who so industriously che- 
rish it.

75. After what has been already observ'd, I need not add, that all *Miracles* secretly perform'd, or among that Party only to whose Profit and Advantage the Belief of them turns, must be rejected as counterfeit and false; for as such cannot bear the Test of moral Certitude, so they contradict the very Design of Miracles, which are always wrought in favour of the Unbelieving. But the *Papists* alone must be the *VVitnesses* of their own *Miracles*, and never the *Hereticks* they would convert by them: nor is their Practice less ridiculous in confirming one Miracle by another, as that of *Transubstantiation* by several more.

76. From all this laid together, it follows, that nothing contrary to Reason, whether you consider the Action or Design, is *miraculous*. But there's a good old Distinction that serves all turns: Tho *Miracles* are not contrary to Reason, says one, yet they are surely above it. In what Sense pray? Which is above Reason, the Thing, or the Manner of it? If it be answer'd, the

Sect. 3. last, I suppose the Objector thinks I
mean by *Miracle* ~~some~~ Philosophical
Experiment, or some *Phenomenon* that
surprises only by its Rarity. Could I
tell how a *Miracle* was wrought, I be-
lieve I might do as much my self; but
what may be said to have been this or
that way perform'd, is no *Miracle* at
all. It suffices therefore, that the Truth
of the Action be demonstrated, and
the Possibility of it, to any *Being* able
to govern Nature by instantaneously
extracting, mollifying, mixing, infus-
ing, consolidating, &c. and this, it
may be, by the Ministry of thou-
sands at once; for *Miracles* are pro-
duc'd according to the Laws of Na-
ture, tho above its ordinary Operations,
which are therefore supernaturally
assisted.

77. But finally, it will be said, that
in *the State of the Question*, at the be-
ginning of my Book, I maintain'd the
Manner as well as the Thing was ex-
plicable. But of what? of *Miracles*?
No surely; but of those *Doctrines* in
Confirmation whereof the *Miracles* are
wrought. This I stand by still, and
may add, I hope, that I have clearly
prov'd

prov'd it too: But to say as much of Ch. 6.
Miracles would be to make 'em no *Miracles*, which shews the Weakness, and
Impertinence of this Objection.

C H A P. VI.

When, why, and by whom were MYSTERIES brought into Christianity.

78. **T**HE End of the *LAW* being Righteousness, **JESUS**
CHRIST came not to destroy, but to fulfil Rom.10.4. Mat. 5.17.
it: for he fully and clearly preach'd the purest Morals, he taught that reasonable Worship, and those just Conceptions of Heaven and Heavenly Things, which were more obscurely signifi'd or design'd by the Legal Observations. So having stripp'd the Truth of all those external Types and Ceremonies which made it difficult before, he render'd it easy and obvious to the meanest Capacities. His Disciples and Followers kept to this Simplicity for some considerable time, tho' very early di-

L 4 . vers

Sect. 3. vers Abuses began to get footing a-
~~~ mongst them. The converted *Jews*,  
 who continu'd mighty fond of their  
*Levitical Rites and Feasts*, would wil-  
 lingly retain them, and be Christians  
 too. Thus what at the beginning was  
 but only tolerated in weaker Brethren,  
 became afterwards a part of *Christianity* it self, under the Pretence of *Apot-  
 stolick Prescription or Tradition*.

79. But this was nothing compar'd  
 to the Injury done to Religion by the  
*Gentiles*; who, as they were prosely-  
 tered in greater Numbers than the *Jews*,  
 so the Abuses they introduc'd were of  
 more dangerous and universal Influ-  
 ence. They were not a little scandaliz'd  
 at the plain Dress of the *Gospel*,  
 with the wonderful Facility of the  
 Doctrines it contain'd, having been  
 accustom'd all their Lives to the pom-  
 pous Worship and secret *Mysteries* of  
 Deities without Number. The *Chris-  
 tians* on the other hand were careful to  
 remove all Obstacles lying in the way  
 of the *Gentiles*. They thought the  
 most effectual way of gaining them  
 over to their side was by compounding  
 the Matter, which led them to unwar-  
 ranta-

Wantable Compliances, till at length Ch. 6. they likewise set up for *Mysteries*. Yet ~~~ not having the least Precedent for any Ceremonies from the *Gospel*, excepting *Baptism* and the *Supper*, they strangely disguis'd and transform'd these by adding to them the Pagan Mystick Rites. They administr'd them with the strictest Secrecy; and, to be inferiour to their Aversaries in no Circumstance, they permitted none to assist at them, but such as were antecedently prepar'd or *initiated*. And to inspire their *Catechumens* with most ardent Desires of Participation, they gave out that what was so industriously hid were \* *tremendous* and *unutterable Mysteries*.

8o. Thus left *Simplicity*, the noblest Ornament of the Truth, should expose it to the Contempt of Unbelievers, Christianity was put upon an equal Level with the *Mysteries of Ceres*, or the *Orgies of Bacchus*. Foolish and mistaken Care! as if the most impious Superstitions could be sanctifi'd by the Name of *Christ*. But such is always the *Fruit of prudential and condescending Terms*

\* θεία, απόρρητα μυστήρια.

Sect. 3. Terms of Conversion in RELIGION,  
 whereby the Number and not the Sincerity of Professors is mainly intended.

81. When once the Philosophers thought it their Interest to turn Christians, Matters grew every Day worse and worse: for they not only retain'd the Air, the Genius, and sometimes the Garb of their several Sects, but most of their erroneous Opinions too. And while they pretended to employ their Philosophy in Defence of Christianity, they so confounded them together, that what before was plain to every one, did now become intelligible only to the Learned, who made it still less evident by their litigious Disputes, and vain Subtilties. We must not forget that the Philosophers were for making no meaner a Figure among the Christians than they did formerly among the Heathens; but this was what they could not possibly effect, without rendering every thing abstruse by Terms or otherwise, and so making themselves sole Masters of the Interpretation.

82. These Abuses became almost incurable, when the supreme Magistrate

strate did openly countenance the Christian Religion. Multitudes then profess'd themselves of the Emperor's Perswasion, only to make their Court, and mend their Fortunes by it, or to preserve those Places and Preferments whereof they were already posseſſ'd. These continu'd Pagans in their Hearts; and it may be easily imagin'd that they carry'd all their old Prejudices along with them into a Religion which they purely embrac'd out of Politick Considerations: And so it constantly happens, when the Conscience is forc'd and not perswaded, which was a while after the Case of these Heathens.

83. The zealous Emperors erected stately Churches, and converted the Heathen Temples, Sanctuaries, Fanes or Chappels, to the Use of Christians, after a previous Expiation, and placing the Sign of the Cross in them to assure their Possession to Christ. All their Endowments, with the Benefices of the Priests, Flamens, Augurs, and the whole sacred Tribe, were appropriated to the Christian Clergy. Nay, their

Sect. 3. their very Habits, as \* white Linen Stoles, Mitres, and the like, were retain'd to bring those, as was pretended, to an imperceptible Change, who could not be reconcil'd to the Christian Simplicity and Poverty. But indeed the Design at bottom was to introduce the Riches, Pomp, and Dignities of the Clergy which immediately succeeded.

84. Things being in this Condition, and the Rites of *Baptism* and the *Supper* being very sensibly augmented, it will not be amiss before I pass further to lay down a short Parallel of the antient Heathen and new-com'd Christian *Mysteries*. And I shall endeavour so to do it, as to make it evident

before we come to the *Christian* *Mysteries* <sup>they</sup>

are but *Heathen* *Mysteries* <sup>in</sup> *Christian* *disguise*

~~Non discolor nulli~~ <sup>Non discolor nulli</sup> *Non discolor nulli*  
~~Ante aras, cultus ; velantur corpora lino,~~ <sup>Ante aras, cultus ; velantur corpora lino,</sup>

~~Et Pelusiaco præfulget stamine vertex.~~ <sup>Et Pelusiaco præfulget stamine vertex.</sup> *Sil. Ital.*

~~lib. 3. v. 23.~~ <sup>lib. 3. v. 23.</sup>

~~Alba debet Cererem vestis ; Cerealibus albam~~ <sup>Alba debet Cererem vestis ; Cerealibus albam</sup>

~~Sumite~~ <sup>Sumite</sup> *Ovid. Fast. 1. 4. v. 619.*

~~Color autem Albus præcipue decorus Deo est, tum~~ <sup>Color autem Albus præcipue decorus Deo est, tum</sup>

~~in ceteris, tum maxime in Textili.~~ <sup>in ceteris, tum maxime in Textili.</sup> *Cic. 2. de Lig.*

<sup>cap. 18.</sup>

~~Εδούς δι' αυτούς πάσαι λευκοί, καὶ πάλοι δέη τῷ κα-~~ <sup>Εδούς δι' αυτούς πάσαι λευκοί, καὶ πάλοι δέη τῷ κα-</sup>

~~υλοῦ ἔχοις~~ <sup>υλοῦ ἔχοις</sup> *Lucian. de Deo Syriæ Sacerdotibus.*

~~Linigeri fugiunt Calvi, fistratagi, Turba.~~ <sup>Linigeri fugiunt Calvi, fistratagi, Turba.</sup> *Martial.*

*l. 12. Ep. 29.*

they were one in Nature, however Ch. 6.  
different in their Subjects.

85. *First*, Their Terms were exactly the same without any Alteration: They both made use of the words *initiating* and *perfecting*. They both call'd their *MYSTERIES* *Myseis*, *Te-leioseis*, *Teleiotika*, *Epopteiai*, &c. They both look'd upon *Initiation* as a kind of *deifying*. And they both stil'd their *Priests* *Mystagogue*, *Mystes*, *Hierotele-<sup>Ιεροτελε-</sup>stes*, &c.

*Μυσταγογός*,  
*Τελειωτης*,  
*Μυστης*,  
*Τελειωτης*,  
*Τελειωτης*,  
*Εποπτης*,  
*Θεωρης*.

86. *Secondly*, The Preparatives to their Initiations were the same. The *Gentiles* us'd several \* Washings and *Lustrations*; they † fasted, and ‡ abstain'd

\* *Sacerdos stipatum me religiosa cohorte deducit ad proximas balneas, & prius sueto lavacro traditum, præfatus Deum veniam, purissimè circumrorans abiuit.* *Apul.*

*Hæc sancte ut poscas, Tiberino in gurgite mergis  
Mane caput bis terque, & noctem Flumine purgas.*

*Perf. Sat. 2. v. 15.*

*Ter caput irrorat, ter tollit in æthera palmas.*

*Ovid. Fast. I. 4. v. 315.*

† *Td συνθημα Ελευσινιων μυστειων* "Ερίστων" *Ἐπον ή κυκεῶνα, &c.* Clem. Alex. pag. 13. Arnob. lib. 5.

‡ *Vos quoque abesse procul jubeo, discedite ab aris,  
Quæs tulit hæsterna gaudia nocte Venus.* *Tibul. I. 2.*

*Eleg. I. v. 11.*

*Castæ placent superis, pura cum veste venite,  
Et manibus pueris sumite fontis aquam.* *Tibul.*

*ibid. v. 13.*

Sect. 3. stain'd from Women before *Initiation* ;  
 ~~~ tho the wiser sort did laugh at those  
 who thought such Actions could * expiate Sin, or appease Heaven. But the
Fathers, the admir'd *Fathers*, imitated
 them in all these things ; and this was
 the Origin of Abstinence from certain
 kinds of Meat, of your mock Anniversary
 Fasts, and the Clerical Celibacy.

87. Thirdly, The *Christians* kept
 their *Mysteries* as secret as the *Hea-*
thens did theirs. † *Chrysostom* says,
We shut the Doors when we celebrate our
Mysteries, and exclude the uninitiated.
 || *Basil* of *Cesarea* assures us, that the
Esteem of Mysteries is preserv'd only by
Silence. And (*) *Syndes* says, that
 the *Gentile Mysteries were perform'd by*
Night, because their Veneration proceeds
from Mens Ignorance about them. But
 why

* *Omne nefas, omnemque mali purgamina causam*
Credebat nostri tollere posse senes.

Ovid. Fast. l. 2. v. 35.

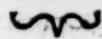
Ah nimium faciles qui triflia crimina cædis,

Fluminea tolli posse putatis aqua ! Idem ib. v. 45.

† *Μυστέρια τὰς δύο εγγενέας κλέπουντες ἐπιτελέμεν, χάρα τὰς*
ἀμύντας ἐπεργομεν. *Homil. in Matth.*

|| *Μυστέριαν τὰ σεμνὰ σπαρτῆς διατούσεται.*

(*) *Αγνοσία σεμνότης δηλ τελετῶν, χάραν διὰ τη-*
πατησεται τὰ μυστήρια. *De providen. Sect. 2.*

why should that deserve Blame in o- Ch. 6.
thers, good *Synesius*, which you allow  in your own Party? or is it that the *Christians* have a better Right to *Myste-*
ries than the *Gentiles*?

88. *Fourthly*, The *Fathers* were ex-
tremely cautious not to speak intelligi-
bly of their *Mysteries* before Unbe-
lievers, or the *Catechumens*; whence
you frequently meet in their Writings
with these or the like Expressions,
** The Initiated know, the Initiated un-
derstand what I say.* And as the *Hea-
thens* did by Proclamation † drive a-
way all the *Profane* from their *Myste-*
ries, so the Deacons of the Primitive
Church cri'd aloud before the Celebra-
tion of *Baptism*, but chiefly of the
Supper, || *Go out all you Catechumens,
walk out all that are not initiated, or
something to this Effect*, for they often
vari'd the Form. *Cyril of Jerusalem*
has a very singular Passage to our pur-
pose,

* *Norunt initiati. August. in locis pluribus. Ἰσαῖαν
τοῦ μαντείου τὸ λεύκενον.* Chrysostom. in Genes.
in Homil. 27. & alibi passim.

† *Θεος δημόδε βεβήλως.* Orpheus, Lucia-
nus, &c.

|| *Οσοι κατηχύμενοι περιέστε, οὐκω πειπατέστε
οσοι αγνῶτοι.*

Sect. 3. pose, * Now when catechising is re-hears'd, if a Catechumen should ask you what the Teachers said, tell it by no means to any that is not initiated: for we entrust you with a Mystery, and the hope of the Life to come. Keep this Mystery then to him that rewardeth: and if any should say unto you, What harm is it, if I also learn? Answer him, that so sick Persons desire Wine: But if it be given to any unseasonably, it makes him frantic, and so two Evils happen; both the sick Man is destroy'd, and the Physician is disparag'd. Thus if a Catechumen hears

* "Οτι πίνου κατάχυσις λέγεται, εάν οι κατηχύμενοι ἔχεται τη ἐρήμωσιν οἱ μισθίσκοντες, μιδέν λέγεται το ἔξω. Μυστίχον γάρ οι παραδίδομεν, καὶ ἐλπίδα μελλόντες αἰώνος. Τίποτον τὸ μυστίχον τῷ μαθητούτη μὴ ποτέ σοι τίς εἴπῃ, τὶ βλαστητῇ, εάν κάγαν μαζῶ; Καὶ οἱ νοσούντες τὴν δύναν ζητῶσιν. Ἀλλα διετέλεσθαι θεοῦ φρενίτην ἐργάζεται, καὶ μή κακό γίνεται, καὶ οὐκοῦν αἴσθελλυται, καὶ οὐτέρες διαβαλλεται. Οὐτος ο κατηχύμενος, εάν ακούῃ παρα πόνη, καὶ ο κατηχύμενος φρενίτης ἐκ διδε γάρ τη πόνησι, καὶ ἐλέγχει τὸ πραγμα, καὶ σκηνετηρίζει τὸ λεγόμενον; καὶ ο πόνος οὐ προδοτή κατακρίνεται. Ηδη δε ου μεδοριψι σίκας, βλεπει μοι μὴ ἐκλαλίσοις, οὐχ ὅτι ἐκ αἵξια αλλιᾶς τὸ λεγόμενα, ἀλλα ὅτι ο ακού αναξία τὸ Νέαδας. Ήτο ποτὲ καὶ ου κατηχύμενος, οὐ διηγούσιμη σοι τὰ προκειμενα. Ήταν τὸ πιέσα λαζήν τὸ οὐλωμα τοῦ μισθίσκου, τότε αὐγούση ὅτι ανάξιος οι κατηχύμενοι τῆς Ἀκοῆς. Cyril. Hierosol. præf. in Catec. cl. Ed. t. Par. 1631.

hears those things from any of the Faith-^{Ch. 6.}
ful, he grows likewise frantick; for not
understanding what he heard, he argues
against the thing, and laughs at what is
said: so the Believer that told it him is
condemn'd as a Betrayer of Secrets. Now
you being one of us, see that you blab out
nothing: not that what we say are not
worthy to be spoken, but that others are
not worthy to hear them. When you
were a Catechumen your self, we never
told you what was propos'd. But when
you have learnt by experience the Subli-
mity of those things which are taught,
you will then be convinc'd that the Cate-
chumens are unworthy to hear them.

89. Fifthly, The Steps and Degrees
in both their Initiations are the same.
The Heathens had * five Degrees ne-
cessary to Perfection. First, common
Purgation; Secondly, more private
Purgation; Thirdly, a liberty of stand-
ing amongst the Initiated; Fourthly,
Initiation; and, Lastly, the Right of
seeing every thing, or being Eopts.

M

Among

* Εν τοῖς ἴσεσιν ἡγεμονεύειν αἱ πανδύμοι καὶ δερούς,
εἴτε δὲ ταῦτας αἱ ἀπόρητοτεραι, μετὰ ταῦτας οὐ-
σίους, καὶ δὴ ταῦτας μνήσεις, εν τέλει δὲ ἐποπτεῖαι.
Olympiodor.

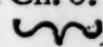
Sect. 3. Among the *Christians* likewise there were five Steps by which their Penitents were re-admitted to Communion. First they were oblig'd to remain some Years separate from the Congregation lamenting their Sins, whence this Step was call'd *Proclausis*.
 Προκλαυσις.

Secondly, they were remov'd nearer the People, where during three Years they might hear the Priests, tho not see them: this Step was therefore call'd *Acroasis*.
 Ακροασις.

Thirdly, for three Years more they might hear and see, but not mix with the Congregation: this Period was call'd *Hypoptosis*. Fourthly, they might stand with the People, but not receive the Sacraments: this was their *Systasis*. And, Fifthly, they were admitted to Communion, which was call'd *Methexis*. The new Converts likewise, under Preparation to participate of the Mysteries, were stil'd *Catechumens*; then *competent*; and, lastly, *Epopts*, *perfect*, or *Believers*: which are the very Degrees in Name and Quality, to which *Pythagoras* oblig'd his Disciples.

90. I could draw out this Parallel much larger, but here's enough to shew

how

how Christianity became mysterious, and Ch. 6.
how so divine an Institution did, 
through the Craft and Ambition of
Priests and Philosophers, degenerate in-
to meer Paganism.

91. *Mystery* prevail'd very little in the first Hundred or Century of Years after *Christ*; but in the second and third, it began to establish it self by *Ceremonies*. To *Baptism* were then added the tasting of Milk and * Honey, † Anointing, the Sign of the Cross, a white Garment, &c. There was quickly after a farther Acceffion of Questions and Answers, of anteecedent Fastings and Watchings, Kissing, and set times of Administration. After *Baptism* they did not || wash for a whole Week, exactly answerable to the Superftition of the Gentiles, who

M 2 never

* Denique ut a Baptismate ingrediar, aquam adi-
turi ibidem, sed & aliquanto prius in ecclēsia sub An-
tistitis manu, contestamur nos renunciare Diabolo, &
pompæ, & angelis ejus. Dehinc ter mergitamur, am-
plius aliquid respondentēs quam Dominus in Evangelio
determinavit. Inde suscepit lactis & mellis concordiam
prægustamus; ex eaque die Lavacro quotidiano per to-
tam Hebdomadē abstinemus. *Tertullian.* pag. 102.

† Egressi de Lavacro perungimur benedicta Uncti-
one, &c. *Id.* pag. 226.

|| *Tertul.* in loco citato.

Sect. 3. never put off the * Garment in which
 they were *initiated* till it fell all to tatters. Next were added Injection of Salt and Wine into the Mouths of the Baptiz'd, and a second Unction, with Imposition of Hands. But in later times there was no end of Lights, Exorcisms, Exsufflations, and many other Extravagancies of Jewish, or Heathen Original. From this Source sprang not only the Belief of *Omens*, *Presages*, *Apparitions*, † the Custom of *Burying* with three shovel-fulls of Earth, with other vulgar Observations among Christians; but also *Lights*, *Feasts* or *Holy-days*, *Consecrations*, *Images*, worshipping towards the || *East*, *Altars*,

* Ο δὲ μυστηρος τὸ ινάτην, ὁ ἐφόρει ἐπὶ τῇ μυστηρίῳ πεποτε ἀπειδέστο μέχεις ἀντελέως αφανισθῆ ἀρρών. Scholiast. in Plut. Aristophan.

† Pruisquam in eos [scil. mortuos] injecta Gleba est, Locus ille, ubi crematum est corpus, nihil habet Religionis: Anglice, Before this Ceremony, 'tis not Hallow'd Ground. Cic. I. 2. de Leg. cap. 22.

Archytas naufragus, prætereuntem exorans ne se insepultum relinquat, sic preces absolvit apud Horatium:

Quanquam festinas, non est mora longa: licebit,
 Injecto TER pu vere, curras. Lib. I. Od. 28. v. 35.

|| His Dea placanda est, hac tu conversus ad ortum
 Dic quater; & vivo perlue rore manus. Ovid.
 Fast. I. 4. v. 777. 'O δέ Ννὸς ὥρει μεν ἐπέλαισον ἀνί-
 ορται. Lucian. pag. 674. Edit. Amst. 1687.

tars, Musick, Dedications of Churches, Ch. 6.
and in them distinct Places for the LAI-
TY, (as they speak) and the CLER-
GY: for there is nothing like these
in the Writings of the Apostles, but
they are all plainly contain'd in the
Books of the Gentiles, and was the
Substance of their Worship.

92. All the Rites of the *Supper*, too tedious to particularize, were introduc'd by degrees after the same manner. So by endeavouring to make the plainest things in the World appear *mysterious*, their very Nature and Use were absolutely perverted and destroy'd, and are not yet fully restor'd by the purest Reformations in *Christendom*. But we must not forget how *Tertullian* himself has acknowledg'd that for their frequent *Crossings* and other *Baptismal* Rites, for their scrupling to let any of the *Bread* and *Wine* fall to the Ground, or to receive them from any hand but the *Priest's*, with the like Ceremonies, they had no colour of [†] Au-

M 3 tho-

* Harum & aliarum ejusmodi Disciplinarum, si legem expostales Scripturarum, nullam invenies; Traditio tibi prætenditur auctrix, Consuetudo confirmatrix, & Fides observatrix. Pag. 102.

Sect. 3. thority from the *Scriptures*, but only
 ~~~~~ from *Custom* and *Tradition*.

93. Now their own Advantage be-  
 ing the Motive that put the Primitive  
*Clergy* upon reviving *Mystery*, they  
 quickly erected themselves by its Assi-  
 stance into a separate and politick Bo-  
 dy, tho not so soon into their various  
 Orders and Degrees. For in the two  
 first Centuries we meet with no *Sub-  
 Deacons*, *Readers*, or the like; much  
 less with the Names or Dignities of  
*Popes*, *Cardinals*, *Patriarchs*, *Metropo-  
 litans*, *Archbishops*, *Primates*, *Suffra-  
 gans*, *Archdeacons*, *Deans*, *Chancellors*,  
*Vicars*, or their numerous Dependants  
 and Retinue. But in small time *Mys-  
 tery* made way for those, and several  
 other Usurpations upon Mankind, un-  
 der pretence of *Labourers in the Lord's  
 Vineyard*.

94. The Degrees or Constitutions  
 concerning *Ceremonies* and *Discipline*,  
 to encrease the Splendor of this new  
 State, did strangely affect, stupify, and  
 amaze the Minds of the ignorant Peo-  
 ple; and made them believe they  
 were in good earnest Mediators be-  
 tween God and Men, that could fix  
 Sanc-

Sanctity to certain Times, Places, Persons, or Actions. They seem'd almost a different and more divine Species of Creatures, distinguishing themselves from other Men in their *Garb*, in their manner of living by *Tithes* and *Donations*, in their *separate Places* at Church, and several other ways. By this means the *Clergy* were able to do any thing ; they engross'd at length the sole Right of interpreting *Scripture*, and with it claim'd *Infallibility*, to their Body.

95. This is the true Origin and Progress of the *Christian Mysteries* ; and we may observe how great a share of their Establishment is owing to *Ceremonies*. These never fail to take off the Mind from the Substance of *Religion*, and lead Men into dangerous Mistakes : for *Ceremonies* being easily observ'd, every one thinks himself religious enough that exactly performs them. But there is nothing so naturally opposite as *CEREMONY* and *CHRISTIANITY*. The latter discovers Religion naked to all the World, and the former delivers it under mystical Representations of a meerly arbitrary Signification.

Sect. 3. 96. It is visible then that *Ceremonies* perplex instead of explaining ; but supposing they made things easier, then that would be the best Religion which had most of them, for they are generally, and may all be made, equally significative. A Candle put into the Hands of the *Baptiz'd*, to denote the Light of the *Gospel*, is every whit as good a *Ceremony* as to make the Sign of the Cross upon their Fore-heads, in token of owning Christ for their Master and Saviour. Wine, Milk, and Honey signify spiritual Nourishment, Strength, and Gladness, as well as standing at the *Gospel* betokens our Readiness to hear or profess it.

97. In short, there's no degree of *Enthusiasm* higher than placing Religion in such Fooleries ; nor any thing so base as by these fraudulent Arts to make the *Gospel* of no effect, unless as far as it serves a Party. But I shall have a better Occasion of exhausting the Subject of *Ceremonies* elsewhere. I treat of 'em here only as they made up the *Gentile Mysteries*, and were afterwards brought in to constitute those of the *Christians*. But as the vast

vast multitudes of the latter quickly ren- Ch. 6.  
der'd all secret Rites almost impossible, ~~~  
so to preserve the *Mystery*, things were  
purposely made downright unintelligi-  
ble, or very perplex'd. In this Point  
our pretended *Christians* outdid all  
the *Mysteries* of the *Heathens*; for the  
Honour of these might be destroy'd  
by Discovery, or the babling Tongue  
of any initiated Person. But the new  
*Mysteries* were thus securely plac'd a-  
bove the Reach of all Sense and  
Reason. Nay, so jealous were the  
**CLERGY** of their own Order, lest  
any of 'em should irreligiously un-  
fold those sublime *Mysteries* to the  
profanely inquisitive **LAITY**, that  
they thought fit to put it as much out  
of the Power of the Holy Tribe it self,  
as out of ours, to understand them;  
and so it continues, in a great measure,  
to this day.

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The

## The CONCLUSION.

THUS I have endeavour'd to shew others, what I'm fully convinc'd of my self, that there is no *MYSTERY* in *CHRISTIANITY*, or the most perfect *Religion*; and that by Consequence nothing *contradictory* or *inconceivable*, however made an *Article of Faith*, can be contain'd in the *Gospel*, if it be really the Word of God: for I have hitherto argu'd only upon this Supposition, for the Reasons to be seen towards the end of the Preface.

Notwithstanding all Pretences that may be made to the contrary, it is evident that no particular *Instances* or *Doctrines* of any sort can serve for a proper Answer to this **DISCOURSE**; for, as long as the Reasons of it hold good, whatever *Instance* can be alledg'd must either be found not *mysterious*, or, if it prove a

MY-

MYSTERY, not divinely reveal'd. There is no middle way, that I can see. When those Passages of Scripture I have cited for my Assertion, are either reconcil'd to such as any would bring against me, or prov'd not to be understood by me; when my Arguments against all *inconceivable Mysteries*, and the Absurdity of God's revealing any such *Mysteries*, are confuted, 'tis time enough then for others to produce *Examples*, or for me to consider 'em. And tho by convincing People that *all the Parts of their RELIGION must not only be in themselves, but to them also must appear, sound and intelligible*, I might justly leave every one to discover to himself the Reasonableness or Unreasonableness of his Religion (which is no difficult Busines, when once Men are perswaded that they have a right to do it;) yet the Duties I owe GOD and the World oblige me to proceed further according as I enjoy Health or Leisure, without limiting my self as to any time, that being a thing in no Man's Power to command at his Pleasure.

My

*The Conclusion.*

My next Task therefore is (God Willing) to prove the Doctrines of the *New Testament* perspicuous, possible, and most worthy of God, as well as all calculated for the highest Benefits of Man. Some will not thank me, it's probable, for so useful an Undertaking; and others will make me a *Heretick* in grain for what I have perform'd already. But as it is Duty, and no Body's Applause, which is the Rule of my Actions; so, God knows, I no more value this cheap and ridiculous Nick-  
 AG.24.14. name of a *Heretick* than *Paul* did before me: for I acknowledg no *ORTHODOXT* but the *TRUTH*; and, I'm sure, where-ever the *TRUTH* is, there must be also the *CHURCH*, of God I mean, and not any Human Faction or Policy. Besides, the Imputation of *Heterodoxy* being now as liberal upon the slightest Occasions, out of Ignorance, Passion, or Malice, as in the Days of *Irenaeus* and *Epiphanius*, it is many times instead of a Reproach the greatest Honour imaginable.

Some

Some good Men may be apt to say, that, supposing my Opinion never so true, it may notwithstanding occasion much harm ; because when People find themselves impos'd upon in any part of *Religion*, they are ready to call the whole in question. This Offence is plainly taken, not given ; and my Design is nothing the less good, if ill-dispos'd Persons abuse it, as they frequently do *Learning*, *Reason*, *Scripture*, and the best things in the World. But it is visible to every one that they are the *Contradictions* and *Mysteries* unjustly charg'd upon *Religion*, which occasion so many to become *Deists* and *Atheists*. And it should be consider'd likewise that when any, not acquainted with it, are dazl'd by the sudden Splendor of the *Truth*, their Number is not comparable to theirs who see clearly by its Light. Because several turn'd *Libertines* and *Atheists* when *PRIEST-CRAFT* was laid so open at the *Reformation*, were *Luther*, *Calvin*, or *Zwinglius* to be blam'd for it ? or which should weigh most with them, these few prejudic'd *Scepticks*,

ticks, or those thousands they converted from the Superstitions of *Rome*? I'm therefore for giving no Quarter to *ERROR* under any pretence; and will be sure, where-ever I have Ability or Opportunity, to expose it in its true Colours, without rendring my Labour ineffectual, by weakly mincing or softning of any thing.

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*F I N I S.*

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